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Alfred Laurssen

from

Bobby & Betty.

FOUR IN ONE
ADVENTURES

NORTH OF FIFTYTHREE

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THE DUEL

THE DUEL

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CAPTAIN WARDLAW'S

KITBAGS

BY HENRY WARDLAW

GARDNER CITY PUBLISHING CO., INC.

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FOUR IN ONE ADVENTURES

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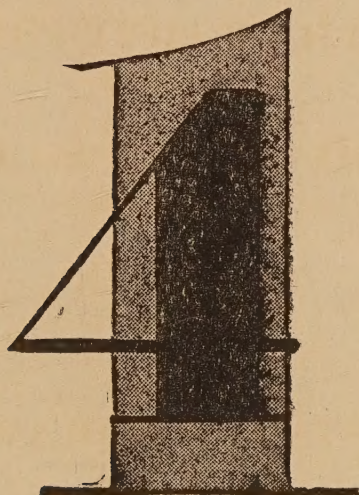
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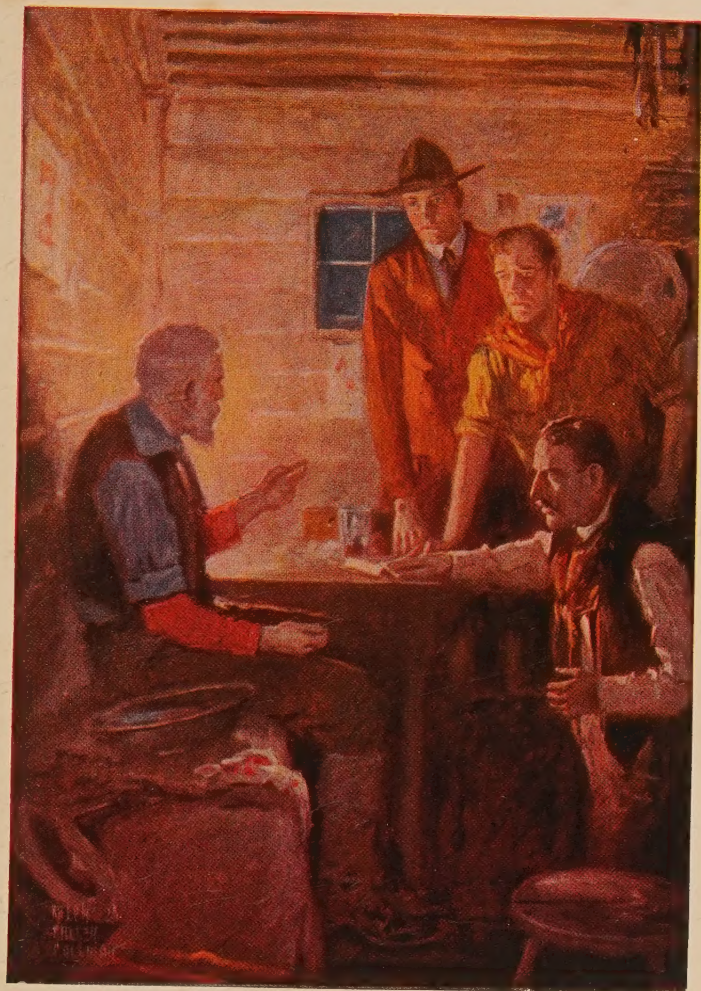
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FOUR IN ONE ADVENTURES



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NORTH OF
FIFTY-THREE
REX BEACH



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NORTH OF FIFTY-THREE

BIG George was drinking, and the activities of the little Arctic mining camp were paralyzed. Events invariably ceased their progress and marked time when George became excessive, and now nothing of public consequence stirred except the quicksilver, which was retiring fearfully into its bulb at the song of the wind which came racing over the lonesome, bitter, northward waste of tundra.

He held the centre of the floor at the Northern Club, and proclaimed his modest virtues in a voice as pleasant as the cough of a bull-walrus.

"Yes, me! Little Georgie! I did it. I've licked 'em all from Herschel Island to Dutch Harbor, big uns and little uns. When they didn't suit I made 'em over. I'm the boss carpenter of the Arctic and I own this camp; don't I, Slim? Hey? Answer me!" he roared at the emaciated bearer of the title, whose attention seemed wandering from the inventory of George's startling traits toward a card game.

"Sure ye do," nervously smiled Slim, frightened out of a heart-solo as he returned to his surroundings.

"Well, then, listen to what I'm saying. I'm the big chief of the village, and when I'm stimulated and happy them fellers I don't like hides out and lets me and Nature operate things. Ain't that right?" He glared inquiringly at his friends.

Red, the proprietor, explained over the bar in a whisper to Captain, the new man from Dawson: "That's Big George, the whaler. He's a squaw-man and sort of a bully—see? When he's sober he's on the level strickly, an' we all likes him fine, but when he gets to fightin' the pain-killer, he ain't altogether a gentleman. Will he fight? Oh! Will he fight? Say! he's there with chimes, he is! Why, Doc Miller's made a grub-stake rebuildin' fellers that's had a lingerin' doubt cached away about that, an' now when he gets the booze up his nose them patched-up guys oozes away an' hibernates till the gas dies out in him. Afterwards he's sore on himself an' apologizes to everybody. Don't get into no trouble with him, cause he's two checks past the limit. They don't make 'em as bad as him any more. He busted the mould."

George turned, and spying the new-comer, approached, eyeing him with critical disfavor.

Captain saw a bear-like figure, clad cap-a-pie in native fashion. Reindeer pants, with the hair inside, clothed legs like rock pillars, while out of the loose squirrel parka a corded neck rose, brown and strong, above which darkly gleamed a rugged face seamed and

scarred by the hate of Arctic winters. He had kicked off his deer-skin socks, and stood barefooted on the cold and draughty floor, while the poison he had imbibed showed only in his heated face. Silently he extended a cracked and hardened hand, which closed like the armored claw of a crustacean and tightened on the crunching fingers of the other. Captain's expression remained unchanged and, gradually slackening his grip, the sailor roughly inquired:

"Where'd you come from?"

"Just got in from Dawson yesterday," politely responded the stranger.

"Well! what're you goin' to do now you're here?" he demanded.

"Stake some claims and go to prospecting, I guess. You see, I wanted to get in early before the rush next spring."

"Oh! I s'pose you're going to jump some of our ground, hey? Well, you ain't! We don't want no claim jumpers here," disagreeably continued the seaman; "we won't stand for it. This is my camp—see? I own it, and these is my little children." Then, as the other refused to debate with him, he resumed, groping for a new ground of attack.

"Say! I'll bet you're one of them eddicated dudes, too, ain't you? You talk like a feller that had been to college," and, as the other assented, he scornfully called to his friends, saying, "Look here, fellers! Pipe the jellyfish! I never see one of these here animals that was worth a cuss; they plays football an' smokes

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cigareets at school; then when they're weaned they come off up here an' jump our claims 'cause we can't write a location notice proper. They ain't no good. I guess I'll stop it."

Captain moved toward the door, but the whaler threw his bulky frame against it and scowlingly blocked the way.

"No, you don't. You ain't goin' to run away till I've had the next dance, Mister Ed-dication! Humph! I ain't begun to tell ye what a useless little barnacle you are."

Red interfered, saying: "Look 'ere, George, this guy ain't no playmate of yourn. We'll all have a jolt of this disturbance promoter, an' call it off." Then, as the others approached, he winked at Captain, and jerked his head slightly toward the door.

The latter, heeding the signal, started out, but George leaped after him and, seizing an arm, whirled him back, roaring:

"Well, of all the cussed impidence I ever see! You're too high-toned to drink with us, are you? You don't get out of here now till you take a lickin' like a man."

He reached over his head and, grasping the hood of his fur shirt, with one movement he stripped it from him, exposing a massive naked body, whose muscles swelled and knotted beneath a skin as clear as a maiden's, while a map of angry scars strayed across the heavy chest.

As the shirt sailed through the air, Red lightly vaulted to the bar and, diving at George's naked middle, tackled beautifully,

crying to Captain: "Get out quick; we'll hold him."

Others rushed forward and grasped the bulky sailor, but Captain's voice replied: "I sort of like this place, and I guess I'll stay a while. Turn him loose."

"Why, man, he'll kill ye," excitedly cried Slim. "Get out!"

The captive hurled his peacemakers from him and, shaking off the clinging arms, drove furiously at the insolent stranger.

In the cramped limits of the corner where he stood, Captain was unable to avoid the big man, who swept him with a crash against the plank door at his back, grasping hungrily at his throat. As his shoulders struck, however, he dropped to his knees and, before the raging George could seize him, he avoided a blow which would have strained the rivets of a strength-tester and ducked under the other's arms, leaping to the cleared centre of the floor.

Seldom had the big man's rush been avoided and, whirling, he swung a boom-like arm at the agile stranger. Before it landed, Captain stepped in to meet his adversary and, with the weight of his body behind the blow, drove a clenched and bony fist crashing into the other's face. The big head with its blazing shock of hair snapped backward and the whaler drooped to his knees at the other's feet.

The drunken flush of victory swept over Captain as he stood above the swaying figure; then, suddenly, he felt the great bare arms close about his waist with a painful grip. He

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struck at the bleeding face below him and wrenched at the circling bands which wheezed the breath from his lungs, but the whaler squeezed him, writhing, to his breast, and rising, unsteadily wheeled across the floor and in a shiver of broken glass fell crashing against the bar and to the floor.

As the struggling men writhed upon the planks the door opened at the hurried entrance of an excited group, which paused at the sight of the ruin, then, rushing forward, tore the men apart.

The panting Berserker strained at the arms about his glistening body, while Captain, with sobbing sighs, relieved his aching lungs and watched his enemy, who frothed at the interference.

"It was George's fault," explained Slim to the questions of the arrivals. "This feller tried to make a get-away, but George had to have his amusement."

A new-comer addressed the squaw-man in a voice as cold as the wind. "Cut this out, George! This is a friend of mine. You're making this camp a reg'lar hell for strangers, and now I'm goin' to tap your little snap. Cool off—see?"

Jones's reputation as a bad gunmen went hand in hand with his name as a good gambler, and his scantry remarks invariably evoked attentive answers, so George explained: "I don't like him Jones, and I was jus' makin' him over to look like a man. I'll do it yet, too," he flashed wrathfully at his quiet antagonist.

"'Pears to me like he's took a hand in the remodelling himself," replied the gambler, "but if you're lookin' for something to do, here's your chance. Windy Jim just drove in and says Barton and Kid Sullivan are adrift on the ice."

"What's that?" questioned eager voices, and, forgetting the recent trouble at the news, the crowd pressed forward anxiously.

"They was crossin' the bay and got carried out by the off-shore gale," explained Jones. "Windy was follerin' 'em when the ice ahead parted and begun movin' out. He tried to yell to 'em, but they was too far away to hear in the storm. He managed to get back to the land and follered the shore ice around. He's over at Hunter's cabin now, most dead, face and hands froze pretty bad."

A torrent of questions followed and many suggestions as to the fate of the men.

"They'll freeze before they can get ashore," said one.

"The ice-pack'll break up in this wind," added another, "and if they don't drown, they'll freeze before the floe comes in close enough for them to land."

From the first announcement of his friends' peril, Captain had been thinking rapidly. His body, sore from his long trip and aching from the hug of his recent encounter, cried woe-fully for rest, but his voice rose calm and clear: "We've got to get them off," he said. "Who will go with me? Three is enough."

The clamoring voices ceased, and the men

wheeled at the sound, gazing incredulously at the speaker. "What!—In this storm?—You're crazy," many voices said.

He gazed appealingly at the faces before him. Brave and adventurous men he knew them to be, jesting with death, and tempered to perils in this land where hardship rises with the dawn, but they shook their ragged heads hopelessly.

"We *must* save them!" resumed Captain hotly. "Barton and I played as children together, and if there's not a man among you who's got nerve to follow me—I'll go alone, by Heavens!"

In the silence of the room, he pulled the cap about his ears and, tying it snugly under his chin, drew on his huge fur mittens; then with a scornful laugh he turned toward the door.

He paused as his eye caught the swollen face of Big George. Blood had stiffened in the heavy creases of his face like rusted stringers in a ledge, while his mashed and discolored lips protruded thickly. His hair gleamed red, and the sweat had dried upon his naked shoulders, streaked with dirt and flecked with spots of blood, yet the battered features shone with the unconquered, fearless light of a rough, strong man.

Captain strode to him with outstretched hand. "You're a man," he said. "You've got the nerve, George, and you'll go with me, won't you?"

"What! Me?" questioned the sailor vaguely. His wondering glance left Captain, and

drifted round the circle of shamed and silent faces—then he straightened stiffly and cried: "Will I go with you? Certainly! I'll go to — with you."

Ready hands harnessed the dogs, dragged from protected nooks where they sought cover from the storm which moaned and whistled round the low houses. Endless ragged folds of sleet whirled out of the north, then writhed and twisted past, vanishing into the gray veil which shrouded the landscape in a twilight gloom.

The fierce wind sank the cold into the aching flesh like a knife and stiffened the face to a whitening mask, while a fusillade of frozen ice-particles beat against the eyeballs with blinding fury.

As Captain emerged from his cabin, furred and hooded, he found a long train of crouching, whining animals harnessed and waiting, while muffled figures stocked the sled with robes and food and stimulants.

Big George approached through the whirling white, a great squat figure with fluttering squirrel tails blowing from his parka, and at his heels there trailed a figure, skin-clad and dainty.

"It's my wife," he explained briefly to Captain. "She won't let me go alone."

They gravely bade farewell to all, and the little crowd cheered lustily against the whine of the blizzard as, with cracking whip and hoarse shouts, they were wrapped in the cloudy winding sheet of snow.

Arctic storms have an even sameness; the intense cold, the heartless wind which augments tenfold the chill of the temperature, the air thick and dark with stinging flakes rushing by in an endless cloud. A drifting, freezing, shifting eternity of snow, driven by a ravening gale which sweeps the desolate, bald wastes of the Northland.

The little party toiled through the smother till they reached the "igloos" under the breast of the tall coast bluffs, where coughing Eskimos drilled patiently at ivory tusks and gambled the furs from their backs at stud-horse poker.

To George's inquiries they answered that their largest canoe was the three-holed bidarka on the cache outside. Owing to the small circular openings in its deck, this was capable of holding but three passengers, and Captain said: "We'll have to make two trips, George."

"Two trips, eh?" answered the other. "We'll be doin' well if we last through one, I'm thinking."

Lashing the unwieldy burden upon the sled, they fought their way along the coast again till George declared they were opposite the point where their friends went adrift. They slid their light craft through the ragged wall of ice hummocks guarding the shore pack, and dimly saw, in the gray beyond them, a stretch of angry waters mottled by drifting cakes and floes.

George spoke earnestly to his wife, instruct-

ing her to keep the team in constant motion up and down the coast a rifle-shot in either direction, and to listen for a signal of the return. Then he picked her up as he would a babe, and she kissed his storm-beaten face.

"She's been a good squaw to me," he said, as they pushed their dancing craft out into the breath of the gale, "and I've always done the square thing by her; I s'pose she'll go back to her people now, though."

The wind hurried them out from land, while it drove the sea-water in freezing spray over their backs and changed their fur garments into scaly armor, as they worked through the ice cakes, peering with strained eyes for a sign of their friends.

The sailor, with deft strokes, steered them between the grinding bergs, raising his voice in long signals like the weird cry of a siren.

Twisting back and forth through the floes, they held to their quest, now floating with the wind, now paddling desperately in a race with some drifting mass which dimly towered above them and splintered hungrily against its neighbor close in their wake.

Captain emptied his six-shooter till his numbed fingers grew rigid at the trigger, and always at his back swelled the deep shouts of the sailor, who, with practised eye and mighty strokes, forced their way through the closing lanes between the jaws of the ice pack.

At last, beaten and tossed, they rested, disheartened and hopeless. Then, as they drifted, a sound struggled to them against the wind

—a faint cry, illusive and fleeting as a dream voice—and, still doubting, they heard it again.

"Thank God! We'll save 'em yet," cried Captain, and they drove the canoe boiling toward the sound.

Barton and Sullivan had fought the cold and wind stoutly hour after hour, till they found their great floe was breaking up in the heaving waters.

Then the horror of it had struck the Kid, till he raved and cursed up and down their little island, as it dwindled gradually to a small acre.

He had finally yielded to the weight of the cold which crushed resistance out of him, and settled, despairing and listless, upon the ice. Barton dragged him to his feet and forced him round their rocking prison, begging him to brace up, to fight it out like a man, till the other insisted on resting, and dropped to his seat again.

The older man struck deliberately at the whitening face of his freezing companion, who recognized the well-meant insult and refused to be aroused into activity. Then to their ears had come the faint cries of George, and, in answer to their screams, through the gloom they beheld a long, covered skin canoe and the anxious faces of their friends.

Captain rose from his cramped seat and, ripping his crackling garments from the boat where they had frozen, he wriggled out of the hole in the deck and grasped the weeping Barton.

"Come, come, old boy! It's all right now," he said.

"Oh, Charlie, Charlie!" cried the other. "I might have known you'd try to save us. You're just in time, though, for the Kid's about all in."

Sullivan apathetically nodded and sat down again.

"Hurry up there; this ain't no G. A. R. Encampment, and you ain't got no time to spare," said George, who had dragged the canoe out and, with a paddle, broke the sheets of ice which covered it. "It'll be too dark to see anything in half an hour."

The night, hastened by the storm, was closing rapidly, and they realized another need of haste, for, even as they spoke, a crack had crawled through the ice-floe where they stood, and, widening as it went, left but a heaving cake supporting them.

George spoke quietly to Captain, while Barton strove to animate the Kid. "You and Barton must take him ashore and hurry him down to the village. He's most gone now."

"But you?" questioned the other. "We'll have to come back for you, as soon as we put him ashore."

"Never mind me," roughly interrupted George. "It's too late to get back here. When you get ashore it'll be dark. Besides, Sullivan's freezing, and you'll have to rush him through quick. I'll stay here."

"No! No! George!" cried the other, as the meaning of it bore in upon him. "I got

you into this thing, and it's my place to stay here. You must go——"

But the big man had hurried to Sullivan, and, seizing him in his great hands, shook the drowsy one like a rat, cursing and beating a goodly share of warmth back into him. Then he dragged the listless burden to the canoe and forced him to a seat in the middle opening.

"Come, come," he cried to the others; "you can't spend all night here. If you want to save the Kid, you've got to hurry. You take the front seat there, Barton," and as he did so, George turned to the protesting Captain: "Shut up, curse you, and get in!"

"I won't do it," rebelled the other. "I can't let you lay down your life in this way, when I made you come."

George thrust a cold face within an inch of the other's and grimly said: "If they hadn't stopped me, I'd beat you into dog-meat this morning, and if you don't quit this snivelling I'll do it yet. Now get in there and paddle to beat——or you'll never make it back. Quick!"

"I'll come back for you then, George, if I live to the shore," Captain cried, while the other slid the burdened canoe into the icy waters.

As they drove the boat into the storm, Captain realized the difficulty of working their way against the gale. On him fell the added burden of holding their course into the wind and avoiding the churning ice cakes. The spray whipped into his face like shot, and

froze as it clung to his features. He strained at his paddle till the sweat soaked out of him and the cold air filled his aching lungs.

Unceasingly the merciless frost cut his face like a keen blade, till he felt the numb paralysis which told him his features were hardening under the touch of the cold.

An arm's length ahead the shoulders of the Kid protruded from the deck hole where he had sunk again into the death sleep, while Barton, in the forward seat, leaned wearily on his ice-clogged paddle, moaning as he strove to shelter his face from the sting of the blizzard.

An endless time they battled with the storm, slowly gaining, foot by foot, till in the darkness ahead they saw the wall of shore ice and swung into its partial shelter.

Dragging the now unconscious Sullivan from the boat, Captain rolled and threshed him, while Barton, too weak and exhausted to assist, feebly strove to warm his stiffened limbs.

In answer to their signals, the team appeared, maddened by the lash of the squaw. Then they wrapped Sullivan in warm robes, and forced scorching brandy down his throat, till he coughed weakly and begged them to let him rest.

"You must hurry him to the Indian village," directed Captain. "He'll only lose some fingers and toes now, maybe; but you've got to hurry!"

"Aren't you coming, too?" queried Barton.

"We'll hire some Eskimos to go after George. I'll pay 'em anything."

"No, I'm going back to him now; he'd freeze before we could send help, and, besides, they wouldn't come out in the storm and the dark."

"But you can't work that big canoe alone. If you get out there and don't find him you'll never get back. Charlie! let me go, too," he said; then apologized. "I'm afraid I won't last, though, I'm too weak."

The squaw, who had questioned not at the absence of her lord, now touched Captain's arm. "Come," she said; "I go with you." Then addressing Barton, "You quick go Indian house; white man die, mebbe. Quick! I go Big George."

"Ah, Charlie, I'm afraid you'll never make it," cried Barton, and, wringing his friend's hand, he staggered into the darkness behind the sled wherein lay the fur-bundled Sullivan.

Captain felt a horror of the starving waters rise up in him and a panic shook him fiercely, till he saw the silent squaw waiting for him at the ice edge. He shivered as the wind searched through his dampened parka and hardened the wet clothing next to his body, but he took his place and dug the paddle fiercely into the water, till the waves licked the hair of his gauntlets.

The memory of that scudding trip through the darkness was always cloudy and visioned. Periods of keen alertness alternated with mo-

ments when his weariness bore upon him till he stiffly bent to his work, wondering what it all meant.

It was the woman's sharpened ear which caught the first answering cry, and her hands which steered the intricate course to the heaving berg where the sailor crouched, for, at their approach, Captain had yielded to the drowse of weariness and, in his relief at the finding, the blade floated from his listless hands.

He dreamed quaint dreams, broken by the chilling lash of spray from the strokes of the others, as they drove the craft back against the wind, and he only partly awoke from his lethargy when George wrenched him from his seat and forced him down the rough trail toward warmth and safety.

Soon, however, the stagnant blood tingled through his veins, and under the shelter of the bluffs they reached the village, where they found the anxious men waiting.

Skilful natives had worked the frost from Sullivan's members, and the stimulants in the sled had put new life into Barton as well. So, as the three crawled wearily through the dog-filled tunnel of the igloo, they were met by two wet-eyed and thankful men, who silently wrung their hands or uttered broken words.

When they had been despoiled of their frozen furs, and the welcome heat of whisky and fire had met in their blood, Captain approached the whaler, who rested beside his mate.

"George, you're the bravest man I ever knew, and your woman is worthy of you," he said. He continued slowly, "I'm sorry about the fight this morning, too."

The big man rose and, crushing the extended palm in his grasp, said: "We'll just let that go double, partner. You're as game as I ever see." Then he added: "It *was* too bad them fellers interfered jest when they did—but we can finish it up whenever you say," and as the other, smiling, shook his head, he continued: "Well, I'm glad of it, 'cause you'd sure beat me the next time."



THE THAW AT SLISCO'S

THE storm broke at Salmon Lake, and we ran for Slisco's road house. It whipped out from the mountains, all tore into strips coming through the saw-teeth, lashing us off the glare ice and driving us up against the river banks among the willows. Cold? Well, some! My bottle of painkiller froze slushy, like lemon punch.

There's nothing like a warm shack, with a cache full of grub, when the peaks smoke and the black snow-clouds roar down the gulch.

Other "mushers" were ahead of us at the road house, freighters from Kougarok, an outfit from Teller going after booze, the mail-carrier, and, who do you reckon?—Annie Black. First time I had seen her since she was run out of Dawson for claim jumping.

Her and me hadn't been essential to one another since I won that suit over a water right on Eldorado.

"Hello, Annie," says I, clawing the ice out of my whiskers; "finding plenty of claims down here to relocate?"

"Shut up, you perjured pup," says she, full of disappointing affabilities; "I don't want any dealings with a lying, thieving hypocrite like you, Billy Joyce."

Annie lacks the sporting instinct; she ain't

got the disposition for cup-racing. Never knew her to win a case, and yet she's the instigatress of more emotional activities than all the marked cards and home-distilled liquor in Alaska.

"See here," says I, "a prairie dog and a rattler can hole up together, but humans has got to be congenial, so, seein' as we're all stuck to live in the same room till this blizzard blizzes out, let's forget our troubles. I'm as game a Hibernian as the next, but I don't hibernate till there's a blaze of mutual respect going."

"Blaze away," says she, "though I leave it to the crowd if you don't look and act like a liar and a grave robber." Her speech is sure full of artless hostilities.

Ain't ever seen her? Lord! I thought everybody knew Annie Black. She drifted into camp one day, tall, slab-sided, ornery to the view, and raising fifty or upward; disposition uncertain as frozen dynamite. Her ground plans and elevations looked like she was laid out for a man, but the specifications hadn't been follered. We ain't consumed by curiosity regarding the etymology of every stranger that drifts in, and as long as he totes his own pack, does his assessments, and writes his location notices proper, it goes. Leastways, it went till she hit town. In a month she had the brotherly love of that camp gritting its teeth and throwing back twisters. 'Twas all legitimate, too, and there never was a pennyweight of scandal connected with her name. No, sir! Far's conduct goes, she's al-

ways been the shinin' female example of this country; but them qualities let her out.

First move was to jump Bat Ruggles's town lot. He had four courses of logs laid for a cabin when "Scotty" Bell came in from the hills with \$1800 in coarse gold that he'd rocked out of a prospect shaft on Bat's Moose's Creek claim.

Naturally Bat made general proclamation of thirst, and our town kinder dozed violently into a joyful three days' reverie, during which period of coma the recording time on Bat's lot ran out.

He returns from his "hootch-hunt" to complete the shack, and finds Annie overseeing some "Siwashes" put a pole roof on it. Of course he promotes a race-war immediate, playing the white "open" and the red to lose, so to speak, when she up an' spansks his face, addressing expurgated, motherly cuss-words at him like he'd been a bad boy and swallowed his spoon, or dug an eye out of the kitten. Bat realizes he's against a strange system and draws out of the game.

A week later she jumps No. 3, Gold Bottom, because Donnelly stuck a pick in his foot and couldn't stay to finish the assessment.

"I can't throw her off, or shoot her up," says he, "or even cuss at her like I want to, 'cause she's a lady." And it appeared like that'd been her graft ever since—presumin' on her sex to make disturbances. In six months we hated her like pizen.

There wasn't a stampede in a hundred miles

where her bloomers wasn't leading, for she had the endurance of a moose; and between excitements she prospected for trouble in the manner of relocations.

I've heard of fellers speakin' disrespectful to her and then wandering around dazed and loco after she'd got through painting word pictures of 'em. It goes without saying she was generally popular and petted, and when the Commissioner invited her to duck out down the river, the community sighed, turned over, and had a peaceful rest—first one since she'd come in.

I hadn't seen her from that time till I blowed into Slisco's on the bosom of this forty mile, forty below blizzard.

Setting around the fire that night I found that she'd just lost another of her famous law-suits—claimed she owned a fraction 'longside of No. 20, Buster Creek, and that the Lund boys had changed their stakes so as to take in her ground. During the winter they'd opened up a hundred and fifty feet of awful rich pay right next to her line, and she'd raised the devil. Injunctions, hearings and appeals, and now she was coming back, swearing she'd been "jobbed," the judge had been bought, and the jury corrupted.

"It's the richest strike in the district," says she. "They've rocked out \$11,000 since snow flew, and there's 30,000 buckets of dirt on the dump. They can bribe and bulldoze a decision through this court, but I'll have that fraction yet, the robbers."

“Robbers be cussed,” speaks up the mail man. “You’re the cause of the trouble yourself. If you don’t get a square deal, it’s your own fault—always looking for technicalities in the mining laws. It’s been your game from the start to take advantage of your skirts, what there is of ’em, and jump, jump, jump. Nobody believes half you say. You’re a natural disturber, and if you was a man you’d have been hung long ago.”

I’ve heard her oral formations, and I looked for his epidermis to shrivel when she got her replications focused. She just soared up and busted.

“Look out for the stick,” thinks I.

“Woman, am I,” she says, musical as a bum gramophone under the slow bell. “I take advantage of my skirts, do I? Who are you, you mangy ‘malamoot,’ to criticise a lady? I’m more of a man than you, you tin-horn; I want no favors; I do a man’s work; I live a man’s life; I *am* a man, and I’m proud of it, but you! Nome’s full of your kind; you need a woman to support you; you’re a protoplasm, a polyp. Those Swedes changed their stakes to cover my fraction. I know it, they know it, and if it wasn’t Alaska, God would know it, but He won’t be in again till spring, and then the season’s only three months long. I’ve worked like a man, suffered like a man——”

“Why don’t ye lose like a man?” says he.

“I will, and I’ll fight like one, too,” says she, while her eyes burned like faggots. “They’ve

torn away the reward of years of work and agony, and they forget I can hate like a man."

She was stretched up to high C, where her voice drowned the howl of the storm, and her seamed old face was a sight. I've seen mild, shrinky, mouse-shy women 'roused to hell's own fury, and I felt that night that here was a bad enemy for the Swedes of Buster Creek.

She stopped, listening.

"What's that? There's some one at the door."

"Nonsense," says one of the freighters. "You do so much knocking you can hear the echo."

"There's some one at that door," says she.

"If there was, they'd come in," says Joe.

"Couldn't be, this late in this storm," I adds.

She came from behind the stove, and we let her go to the door alone. Nobody ever seemed to do any favors for Annie Black.

"She'll be seein' things next," says Joe, winking. "What'd I tell you? For God's sake close it—you'll freeze us."

Annie opened the door, and was hid to the waist in a cloud of steam that rolled in out of the blackness. She peered out for a minute, stooped, and tugged at something in the dark. I was at her side in a jump, and we dragged him in, snow-covered and senseless.

"Quick—brandy," says she, slashing at his stiff "mukluks." "Joe, bring in a tub of snow." Her voice was steel sharp.

"Well, I'm danged," says the mail man.

"It's only an Injun. You needn't go crazy like he was a white."

"Oh, you *fool!*" says Annie. "Can't you see? Esquimaux don't travel alone. There's white men behind, and God help them if we don't bring him to."

She knew more about resuscitations than us, and we did what she said, till at last he came out of it, groaning—just plumb wore out and numb.

"Talk to him, Joe; you savvy their noise," says I.

The poor devil showed his excitement, dead as he was.

"There's two men on the big 'Cut-off,' " Joe translates. "Lost on the portage. There was only one robe between 'em, so they rolled up in it, and the boy came on in the dark. Says they can't last till morning."

"That let's them out," says the mail carrier. "Too bad we can't reach them tonight."

"What!" snaps Annie. "Reach 'em? Huh! I said you were a jellyfish. Hurry up and get your things on, boys."

"Have a little sense," says Joe. "You surely ain't a darn fool. Out in this storm, dark as the inside of a cow; blowin' forty miles, and the 'quick' froze. Can't be done. I wonder who they are?"

He "kowitzed" some more, and at the answer of the chattering savage we looked at Annie.

"Him called Lund," shivered the Siwash. I never see anybody harder hit than her.

I love a scrap, but I thinks, "Billy, she's having a stiffer fight than you ever associated with."

Finally she says, kind of slow and quiet: "Who knows where the 'Cut-off' starts?"

Nobody answers, and up speaks the U. S. man again.

"You've got your nerve, to ask a man out on such a night."

"If there was one here, I wouldn't have to ask him. There's people freezing within five miles of here, and you hug the stove, saying: 'It's stormy, and we'll get cold.' Of course it is. If it wasn't stormy they'd be here, too, and it's so cold you'll probably freeze. What's that got to do with it? Ever have your mother talk to you about duty? Thank Heaven I travelled that portage once, and I can find it again if somebody will go with me."

'Twas a blush raising talk, but nobody upset any furniture getting dressed.

She continues:

"So I'm the woman of this crowd and I hide behind my skirts. Mr. Mail Man, show what a glorious creature you are. Throw yourself—get up and stretch and roar. Oh, you barnyard bantam! Has it had its pap tonight? I've a grand commercial enterprise; I'll take all of your bust measurements and send out to the States for a line of corsets. Ain't there half a man among you?"

She continued in this vein, pollutin' the air, and, having no means of defence, we found ourselves follerin' her out into a yelling storm

that beat and roared over us like waves of flame.

Swede luck had guided their shafts onto the richest pay-streak in seven districts, and Swede luck now led us to the Lund boys, curled up in the drifted snow beside their dogs; but it was the level head and cool judgment of a woman that steered us home in the gray whirl of the dawn.

During the deathly weariness of that night I saw past the calloused hide of that woman and sighted the splendid courage cached away beneath her bitter oratory and hostile syllogisms. "There's a story there," thinks I, "an' maybe a man moved in it—though I can't imagine her softened by much affection." It pleased some guy to state that woman's the cause of all our troubles, but I figger they're like whisky—all good, though some a heap better'n others, of course, and when a frail, little, ninety-pound woman gets to bucking and acting bad, there's generally a two-hundred pound man hid out in the brush that put the burr under the saddle.

During the next three days she dressed the wounds of them Scow-weegians and nursed them as tender as a mother.

The wind hadn't died away till along came the "Flying Dutchman" from Dugan's, twenty miles up, floatin' on the skirts of the blizzard.

"Hello, fellers. Howdy, Annie. What's the matter here?" says he. "We had a woman at Dugan's too—purty as a picture; different from the Nome bunch—real sort of a lady."

"Who is she?" says I, "an' what's she doin' out here on the trail?"

"Dunno, but she's all right; come clean from Dawson with a dog team; says she's looking for her mother."

I heard a pan clatter on the floor where Annie was washing dishes, and her face went a sickly gray. She leaned across; gripping the table and straining to ask something, but the words wouldn't come, while "Dutch" continues:

"Somethin' strange about it, *I* think. She says her ma's over in the Golden Gate district, workin' a rich mine. Of course we all laughed at her, and said there wasn't a woman in the whole layout, 'ceptin' *some* folks might misconstrue Annie here into a kind of a female. She stuck to it though, much as to say we was liars. She's comin' on—what's the matter, Annie—you ain't sore at me effeminate, you by the gentle name of female, are you?"

She had come to him, and gripped his shoulder, till her long, bony fingers buried themselves in his mackinaw. Her mouth was twitching, and she hadn't got shed of that "first-aid-to-the-injured" look.

"What name? What name, Dutch? What name?" She shook him like a rat.

"Bradshaw—but you needn't run your nails through and clinch 'em. Ow! Le'go my white meat. You act like she was your long lost baby. What d'ye think of that idea, fellers? Ain't that a pleasin' conceit? Annie

Black, and a baby. Ha! Ha! that's a hit. Annie and a daughter. A cow-thief and a calla-lily."

"Dutch," says I, "you ain't a-goin' to make it through to Lane's Landing if you don't pull your freight," and I drags the darn fool out and starts him off.

When I came in she was huddled onto a goods box, shaking and sobbing like any woman, while the boys sat around and champed their bits and stomped.

"Take me away, Billy," she says. "For God's sake take me away before she sees me." She slid down to the floor and cried something awful. Gents, that was sure the real distress, nothing soft and sloppy, but hard, wrenchy, deep ones, like you hear at a melodrayma. 'Twas only back in '99 that I seen an awful crying match, though both of the ladies had been drinkin,' so I felt like I was userder to emotion than the balance of the boys, and it was up to me to take a holt.

"Madam," says I, and somehow the word didn't seem out of place any more—"Madam, why do you want to avoid this party?"

"Take me away," she says. "It's my daughter. She's going to find me this way, all rough and immodest and made fun of. But that's the worst you can say, isn't it? I'm a square woman—you know I am, don't you, boys?" and she looked at us fierce and pleadin'.

"Sure," says Joe. "We'll boost you with the girl all right."

"She thinks her father's dead, but he isn't—he ran away with a show woman—a year after we were married. I never told her about it, and I've tried to make a little lady of her."

We found out afterward that she had put the girl in a boarding-school, but couldn't seem to make enough for both of them, and when the Klondyke was struck thought she saw a chance. She came north, insulted by deck hands and laughed at by the officers. At Skagway she nursed a man through typhoid, and when he could walk he robbed her. The mounted police took everything else she had and mocked at her. "Your kind always has money," they said.

That's how it had been everywhere, and that's why she was so hard and bitter. She'd worked and fought like a man, but she'd suffered like a woman.

"I've lied and starved and stolen for her," said Annie, "to make her think I was doing well. She said she was coming in to me, but I knew winter would catch her at Dawson, and I thought I could head her off by spring."

"Now, she's here; but, men, as your mothers loved you, save me from my little girl."

She buried her face, and when I looked at the boys, tears stood in Joe Slisco's eyes and the others breathed hard. Ole Lund, him that was froze worst about the hands, spoke up:

"Someboady tak de corner dat blanket an' blow may nose."

Then we heard voices outside.

"Hello, in there."

Annie stood up, clutching at her throat, and stepped behind the corner of the bunks as the door opened, framing the prettiest picture this old range rider ever saw.

'Twas a girl, glowing pink and red where the cold had kissed her cheeks, with yellow curlicues of hair wandering out under her yarn cap. Her little fox-trimmed parka quit at the knees, showing the daintiest pair of—I can't say it. Anyhow, they wasn't, they just looked like 'em, only nicer.

She stood blinking at us, coming from the bright lights outside, as cute as a new faro box—then:

"Can you tell me where Mrs. Bradshaw lives? She's somewhere in this district. I'm her daughter—come all the way from the States to see her."

When she smiled I could hear the heart-strings of those ragged, whiskered, frost-bit "mushers" bustin' like banjo strings.

"You know her, don't you?" she says, turning to me.

"Know her, Miss? Well, I should snort! There ain't a prospector on the range that ain't proud and honored to call her a friend. Leastways, if there is I'll bust his block," and I cast the bad eye on the boys to wise 'em up. "Ain't I right, Joe?"

"Betcher dam life," says Joe, sort of overstepping the conventions.

"Then tell me where her claim is. It's

quite rich, and you must know it," says she, appealing to him.

Up against it? Sāy! I seen the whites of his eyes show like he was drownding, and he grinned joyfully as a man kicked in the stum-mick.

"Er—er—I just bought in here, and I ain't acquainted much," says he. "Have a drink," and, in his confusion, he sets out the bottle of alkalies that he dignifies by the alias of booze. Then he continues with reg'lar human intelligence.

"Bill, here, he can tell you where the ground is," and the whelp indicates me.

Lord knows my finish, but for Ole Lund. He sits up in his bunk, swaddled in Annie Black's bandages, and through slits between his frost bites, he moults the follering rhetoric:

"Aye tole you vere de claim iss. She own de Number Twenty fraction on Buster Creek, 'longside may and may broder. She's dam good fraction, too."

I consider that a blamed white stunt for Swedes; paying for their lives with the mine they swindled her out of.

Anyhow, it knocked us galley-west.

I'd formulate a swell climax, involving the discovery of the mother, when the mail man spoke up, him that had been her particular abomination, a queer kind of a break in his voice:

"Come out of that."

Mrs. Bradshaw moved out into the light,

and, if I'm any judge, the joy that showed in her face rubbed away the bitterness of the past years. With an aching little cry the girl ran to her, and hid in her arms like a quail.

We men-folks got accumulated up into a dark corner where we shook hands and swore soft and insincere, and let our throats hurt, for all the world like it was Christmas or we'd got mail from home.



BITTER ROOT BILLINGS, ARBITER

BILLINGS rode in from the Junction about dusk, and ate his supper in silence. He'd been East for sixty days, and, although there lurked about him the hint of unwonted ventures, etiquette forbade its mention. You see, in our country, that which a man gives voluntarily is oftentimes later dissected in smoky bunk-houses, or roughly handled round flickering camp fires, but the privacies he guards are inviolate. Curiosity isn't exactly a lost art, but its practice isn't popular nor hygienic.

Later, I found him meditatively whittling out on the porch, and, as the moment seemed propitious, I inquired adroitly: "Did you have a good time in Chicago, 'Bitter Root'?"

"Bully," said he, relapsing into weighty absorption.

"What'd you do?" I inquired with almost the certainty of appearing insistent.

"Don't you never read the papers?" he inquired, with such evident compassion that "Kink" Martin and the other boys snickered. This from "Bitter Root," who scorns literature outside of the "Arkansas Printing," as he terms the illustrations!

"Guess I'll have to show you my press notices," and from a hip pocket he produced

a fat bundle of clippings in a rubber band. These he displayed jealously, and I stared agape, for they were front pages of great metropolitan dailies, marred with red and black scare heads, in which I glimpsed the words, "Billings, of Montana," "'Bitter Root' on Arbitration," "A Lochinvar Out of the West," and other things as puzzling.

"Press Notices!" echoed "Kink" scornfully. "Wouldn't that rope ye? He talks like Big Ike that went with the Wild West Show. When a puncher gets so lazy he can't earn a livin' by the sweat of his pony, he grows his hair, goes on the stage bustin' glass balls with shot ca'tridges and talks about 'press notices.' Let's see 'em, Billings. You pinch 'em as close to your stummick as though you held cards in a strange poker game."

"Well, I *have* set in a strange game amongst aliens," said Billings, disregarding the request, "and I've held the high cards, also I've drawed out with honors. I've sailed the medium high seas with mutiny in the stokehold; I've changed the laws of labor, politics and municipal economies. I went out of God's country right into the heart of the decayin' East, and by the application of a runnin' noose in a hemp rope I strangled oppression and put eight thousand men to work." He paused ponderously. "I'm an Arbitrator!"

"The deuce you are," indignantly cried "Reddy" the cook. "Who says so?"

"Reddy" isn't up in syntax, and his unreasoning loyalty to Billings is an established fact

of such standing that his remarks afford no conjecture.

"Yes, I've cut into the 'Nation's Peril' and the 'Cryin' Evil' good and strong—walkin' out from the stinks of the Union Stock Yards, of Chicago, into the limelight of publicity, via the 'drunk and disorderly' route.

"You see I got those ten carloads of steers into the city all right, but I was so blame busy splatterin' through the tracked-up wastes of the cow pens, an' inhalin' the sewer gas of the west side that I never got to see a newspaper. If I'd 'a' read one, here's what I'd 'a' found, namely: The greatest, stubbornest, riotin'est strike ever known, which means a heap for Chicago, she being the wet-nurse of labor trouble.

"The whole river front was tied up. Nary a steamer had whistled inside the six-mile crib for two weeks, and eight thousand men was out. There was hold-ups and blood-sheddin' and picketin', which last is an alias for assault with intents, and altogether it was a prime place for a cowman, on a quiet vacation—just homelike and natural.

"It was at this point that I enters, bustin' out of the smoke of the Stock Yards, all sweet and beautiful, like the gentle heeroine in the play as she walks through the curtains at the back of the stage.

"Now you know there's a heap of difference between the Stock Yards and Chicago—it's just like coming from Arkansas over into the United States.

"Well, soon as I sold the stock I hit for the lake front and began to ground sluice the coal dust off of my palate.

"I was busy working my booze hydraulic when I see an arid appearin' pilgrim 'longside lookin' thirsty as an alkali flat.

" 'Get in,' says I, and the way he obeyed orders looked like he'd had military training. I felt sort of drawed to him from the way he handled his lick; took it straight and runnin' over; then sopped his hands on the bar and smelled of his fingers. He seemed to just soak it up both ways—reg'lar human blotter.

" 'You lap it up like a man,' says I, 'like a cowman—fully growed—ever been West?'

" 'Nope,' says he, 'born here.'

" 'Well, I'm a stranger,' says I, 'out absorb-in' such beauties of architecture and free lunch as offers along the line. If I ain't keepin' you up, I'd be glad of your company.'

" 'I'm your assistant lunch buster,' says he, and in the course of things he further explained that he was a tugboat fireman, out on a strike, givin' me the follerin' information about the tie-up:

" 'It all come up over a dose of dyspepsia—'

" 'Back up,' interrupted "Kink" squirming, 'are you plum bug? Get together! You're certainly the Raving Kid. Ye must have stone bruised your heel and got concession of the brain.'

" 'Yes sir! Indigestion,' Billings continued. 'Old man Badrich, of the Badrich Transportation Company, has it terrible. It lands on

his solar every morning about nine o'clock, gettin' worse steady, and reaches perihelion along about eleven. He can tell the time of day by taste. One morning when his mouth felt like about ten-forty-five in comes a committee from Firemen & Engineers Local No. 21, with a demand for more wages, proddin' him with the intimations that if he didn't ante they'd tie up all his boats.

"I 'spose a teaspoonful of bakin' soda, assimilated internally around the environments of his appendix would have spared the strike and cheated me out of bein' a hero. As the poet might have said—'Upon such slender pegs is this, our greatness hung.'"

"Oh, Gawd!" exclaimed Mullins, piously.

"Anyhow, the bitterness in the old man's inner tubes showed in the bile of his answer, and he told 'em if they wanted more money he'd give 'em a chance to earn it—they could work nights as well as days. He intimated further that they'd ought to be satisfied with their wages as they'd undoubtedly foller the same line of business in the next world, and wouldn't get a cent for feedin' the fires neither.

"Next mornin' the strike was called, and the guy that breathed treachery and walk-outs was one 'Oily' Heegan, further submerged under the titles of President of the Federation of Fresh Water Firemen; also Chairman of the United Water-front Workmen, which last takes in everything doin' business along the river except the wharf-rats and typhoid germs,

and it's with the disreputableness of this party that I infected myself to the detriment of labor and the triumph of the law.

"D. O'Hara Heegan is an able man, and inside of a week he'd spread the strike 'till it was the cleanest, dirtiest tie-up ever known. The hospitals and morgues was full of non-union men, but the river was empty all right. Yes, he had a persuadin' method of arbitration quite convincing to the most calloused, involving the layin' on of the lead pipe.

"Things got to be pretty fierce bye-and-bye, for they had the police buffaloeed, and disturbances got plentyer than the casualties at a butchers' picnic. The strikers got hungry, too, finally, because the principles of unionism is like a rash on your mechanic, skin deep—inside, his gastrics works three shifts a day even if his outsides is idle and steaming with Socialism.

" 'Oily' fed 'em dray loads of eloquence, but it didn't seem to be real fillin'. They'd leave the lectures and rob a bakery.

"He was a wonder though; just sat in his office, and kept the ship owners waitin' in line, swearin' bitter and refined cuss-words about 'ignorant fiend' and 'cussed pedagogue' which last, for 'Kink's' enlightenment, means a kind of Hebrew meetin'-house.

"These here details my new friend give me, ending with a eulogy on 'Oily' Heegan, the Idol of the Idle.

" 'If he says starve, we starve,' says he, 'and if he says work, we work. See! Oh he's the

goods, he is! Let's go down by the river—mebbe we'll see him.' So me and Murdock hiked down Water Street, where they keep mosquito netting over the bar fixtures and spit at the stove.

"We found him, a big mouthed, shift, kind of man, 'bout as cynical lookin' in the face as a black bass, and full of wind as a toad fish. I exchanged drinks for principles of socialism, and doin' so happened to display my roll. Murdock slipped away and made talk with a friend, then, when Heegan had left, he steers me out the back way into an alley. 'Short cut,' says he, 'to another and a better place.'

"I follers through a back room; then as I steps out the door I'm grabbed by this new friend, while Murdock bathes my head with a gas-pipe billy, one of the regulation, strike promotin' kind, like they use for decoyin' members into the glorious ranks of Labor.

"I saw a 'Burning of Rome' that was a dream, and whole cloudbursts of shootin' stars, but I yanked Mr. Enthusiastic Stranger away from my surcingle and throwed him agin the wall. In the shuffle Murdock shifts my bal-lasts though, and steams up the alley with my greenbacks, convoyed by his friend.

"'Wow-ow,' says I, givin' the distress signal so that the windows rattled, and reachin' for my holster. I'd 'a' got them both, only the gun caught in my suspender. You see, not anticipatin' any live bird shoot I'd put it inside my pants-band, under my vest, for appearances. A forty-five is like fresh air to a drowning

man—generally has to be drawn in haste—and neither one shouldn't be mislaid. I got her out at last and blazed away, just a second after they dodged around the corner. Then I hit the trail after 'em, lettin' go a few sky-shots and gettin' a ghost-dance holler off my stummick that had been troubling me. The wallop on the head made me dizzy though, and I zigzagged awful, tackin' out of the alley right into a policeman.

"'Whee!' says I in joy, for he had Murdock safe by the bits, buckin' consid'able.

"'Stand aside and le'mme 'lectrocute 'im,' says I. I throwed the gun on him and the crowd dogged it into all the doorways and windows convenient, but I was so weak-minded in the knees I stumbled over the curb and fell down.

"Next thing I knew we was all bouncin' over the cobble-stones in a patrol wagon.

"Well, in the morning I told my story to the Judge, plain and unvarnished. Then Murdock takes the stand and busts into song, claiming that he was comin' through the alley toward Clark Street when I staggered out back of a saloon and commenced to shoot at him. He saw I was drunk, and fanned out, me shootin' at him with every jump. He had proof, he said, and he called for the president of his Union, Mr. Heegan. At the name all the loafers and stew-bums in the court-room stomped and said, 'Hear, hear,' while up steps this Napoleon of the Hoboes.

"Sure, he knew Mr. Murdock—had known

him for years, and he was perfectly reliable and honest. As to his robbing me, it was preposterous, because he himself was at the other end of the alley and saw the whole thing, just as Mr. Murdock related it.

"I jumps up. 'You're a liar, Heegan. I was buyin' booze for the two of you'; but a policeman nailed me, chokin' off my rhetorics. Mr. Heegan leans over and whispers to the Judge, while I got chilblains along my spine.

"'Look here, kind Judge,' says I real winning and genteel, 'this man is so good at explainin' things away, ask him to talk off this bump over my ear. I surely didn't get a buggy spoke and laminate myself on the nut.'

"'That'll do,' says the Judge. 'Mr. Clerk, ten dollars and costs—charge, drunk and disorderly. Next!'

"'Hold on there,' says I, ignorant of the involutions of justice, 'I guess I've got the bulge on you this time. They beat you to me, Judge. I ain't got a cent. You can go through me and be welcome to half you find. I'll mail you ten when I get home though, honest.'

"At that the audience giggled, and the Judge says:

"'Your humor doesn't appeal to me, Mr. Billings. Of course, you have the privilege of working it out.' Oh, Glory, the 'Privilege!'

"Heegan nodded at this, and I realized what I was against.

"'Your honor,' says I with sarcastic refinements, 'science tells us that a perfect vacuum

ain't possible, but after watching you I know better, and for you, Mr. Workingman's Friend—us to the floor,' and I run at Heegan.

"Pshaw! I never got started, nor I didn't rightfully come to till I rested in the work-house, which last figger of speech is a pure and beautiful paradox.

"I ain't dwellin' with glee on the next twenty-six days—ten dollars and costs, at four bits a day, but I left there saturated with such hatred for Heegan that my breath smelled of 'em.

"I wanders down the river front, hoping the fortunes of war would deliver him to me dead or alive, when the thought hit me that I'd need money. It was bound to take another ten and costs shortly after we met, and probably more, if I paid for what I got, for I figgered on distendin' myself with satisfaction and his features with uppercuts. Then I see a sign, 'Non-Union men wanted—Big wages.' In I goes, and strains my langwidge through a wire net at the cashier.

" 'I want them big wages,' says I.

" 'What can you do?'

" 'Anything to get the money,' says I. 'What does it take to liquidate an assault on a labor leader?'

"There was a white-haired man in the cage who began to sit up and take notice.

" 'What's your trouble?' says he, and I told him.

" 'If we had a few more like you, we'd bust the strike,' says he, kind of sizin' me up. 'I've

got a notion to try it anyhow,' and he smites the desk. 'Collins what d'ye say if we tow the "Detroit" out? Her crew has stayed with us so far, and they'll stick now if we'll say the word. The unions are hungry and scrapping among themselves, and the men want to go back to work. It's just that devil of a Heegan that holds 'em. If they see we've got a tug crew that'll go, they'll arbitrate, and we'll kill the strike.'

"'Yes, sir!' says Collins, 'but where's the tug crew, Mr. Badrich?'

"'Right here! We three, and Murphy, the bookkeeper. Blast this idleness! I want to fight.'

"'I'll take the same,' says I, 'when I get the price.'

"'That's all right. You've put the spirit into me, and I'll see you through. Can you run an engine? Good! I'll take the wheel, and the others'll fire. It's going to be risky work, though. You won't back out, eh?'"

Reddy interrupted Billings here loudly, with a snort of disgust, while "Bitter Root" ran his fingers through his hair before continuing. Martin was listening intently.

"The old man arranged to have a squad of cops on all the bridges, and I began anticipatin' hilarities for next day.

"The news got out of course, through the secrecies of police headquarters, and when we ran up the river for our tow, it looked like every striker west of Pittsburg had his family on the docks to see the barbecue, accompanied

by enough cobble-stones and scrap iron to ballast a battleship. All we got goin' up was repartee, but I figgered we'd need armor getting back.

"We passed a hawser to the 'Detroit,' and I turned the gas into the tug, blowin' for the Wells Street Bridge. Then war began. I leans out th' door just in time to see a mob charge the bridge. The cops clubbed 'em back, while a roar went up from the docks and roof tops that was like a bad dream. I couldn't see her move none though, and old man Badrich blowed again, expurgatin' himself of as nobby a line of cuss words as you'll muster outside the cattle belt.

" 'Soak 'em,' I yells, 'give 'em all the arbitration you've got handy. If she don't open; we'll jump her,' and I lets out another notch, so that we went plowin' and boilin' toward the draw.

"It looked like we'd have to hurdle it sure enough, but the police beat the crowd back just in time. She wasn't clear open though, and our barge caromed off the spiles. It was like a nigger buttin' a persimmon tree—we rattled off a shower of missiles like an abnormal hail storm. Talk about your coast defence; they heaved everything at us from bad names to railroad iron, and we lost all our window glass the first clatter, while the smoke stack looked like a pretzel with cramps.

"When we scraped through I looked back with pity at the 'Detroit's' crew. She hadn't any wheel house, and the helmsman was due to

get all the attention that was comin' to him. They'd built up a barricade of potato sacks, chicken coops and bric-à-brac around the wheel that protected 'em somewhat, but even while I watched, some Polack filtered a brick through and laid out the quartermaster cold, and he was drug off. Oh! it was refined and esthetic.

"Well, we run the gauntlet, presented every block with stuff rangin' in tensile strength from insults to asphalt pavements, and noise!—say, all the racket in the world was a whisper. I caught a glimpse of the old man leanin' out of the pilot house, where a window had been, his white hair bristly, and his nostrils h'isted, embellishin' the air with surprisin' flights of gleeful profanity.

" 'Hooray! this is livin,' he yells, spyin' me shovelin' the deck out from under the junk. 'Best scrap I've had in years,' and just then some baseball player throwed in from centre field, catching him in the neck with a tomato. Gee! that man's an honor to the faculty of speech.

"I was doin' bully till a cobble-stone bounced into the engine room, makin' a billiard with my off knee, then I got kind of peevish.

"Rush Street Bridge is the last one, and they'd massed there on both sides, like fleas on a razorback. Thinks I, 'If we make it through here, we've busted the strike,' and I glances back at the 'Detroit' just in time to see her crew pullin' their captain into the deck house, limp and bleedin'. The barricade was all

knocked to pieces and they'd flunked absolute. Don't blame 'em much either, as it was sure death to stand out in the open under the rain of stuff that come from the bridges. Of course with no steerin' she commenced to swing off.

"I jumps out the far side of the engine room and yells fit to bust my throat.

"'Grab that wheel! Grab it quick—we'll hit the bridge,' but it was like deaf and dumb talk in a boiler shop, while a wilder howl went up from the water front as they seen what they'd done and smelled victory. There's an awfulness about the voice of a blood-madened club-swingin' mob; it lifts your scalp like a fright wig, particularly if you are the clubee.

"'We've got one chance,' thinks I, 'but if she strikes we're gone. They'll swamp us sure, and all the police in Cook County won't save enough for to hold services on. Then I throwed a look at the opening ahead and the pessimisms froze in me.

"I forgot all about the resiliency of brick-bats and the table manners of riots, for there, on top of a bunch of spiles, ca'm masterful and bloated with perjuries, was 'Oily' Heegan dictatin' the disposition of his forces, the light of victory in his shifty little eyes.

"'Ten dollars and costs,' I shrieks, seein' red. 'Lemmee crawl up them spiles to you.'

"Then inspiration seized me. My soul riz up and grappled with the crisis, for right under my mit, coiled, suggestive and pleadin', was one of the tug's heavin' lines, 'bout a three

eighths size. I slips a runnin' knot in the end and divides the coils, crouchin' behind the deck-house till we come abeam of him, then I straightened, give it a swinging heave, and the noose sailed up and settled over him fine and daisy.

"I jerked back, and 'Oily' Heegan did a high dive from Rush Street that was a geometrical joy. He hit kind of amateurish, doin' what we used to call a 'belly-buster' back home, but quite satisfyin' for a maiden effort, and I reeled him in astern.

"Your Chicago man ain't a gamey fish. He come up tame and squirting sewage like a dissolute porpoise, while I played him out where he'd get the thrash of the propeller.

" 'Help,' he yells, 'I'm a drawnding.'

" 'Ten dollars and costs,' says I, lettin' him under again. 'Do you know who you're drinkin' with this time, hey?'

"I reckon the astonishment of the mob was equal to Heegan's; anyhow I'm told that we was favored with such quietness that my voice sounded four blocks, simply achin' with satisfactions. Then pandemonium tore loose, but I was so engrossed in sweet converse I never heard it or noticed that the 'Detroit' had slid through the draw by a hair, and we was bound for the blue and smilin' lake.

" 'For God's sake, lemme up,' says Heegan, splashin' along and lookin' strangely. I hauls him in where he wouldn't miss any of my ironies, and says:

" 'I just can't do it, 'Oily'—it's wash day.

You're plumb nasty with boycotts and picketings and compulsory arbitrations. I'm goin' to clean you up,' and I sozzled him under like a wet shirt.

"I drug him out again and continues:

" 'This is Chinamen's work, "Oily," but I lost my pride in the Bridewell, thanks to you. It's tough on St. Louis to laundry you up stream this way, but maybe the worst of your heresies 'll be purified when they get that far.' You know the Chicago River runs up hill out of Lake Michigan through the drainage canal and into the St. Louis waterworks. Sure it does—most unnatural stream I ever see about direction and smells.

"I was gettin' a good deal of enjoyment and infections out of him when old man Badrich ran back enamelled with blood and passé tomato juice, the red in his white hair makin' his top look like one of these fancy ice-cream drinks you get at a soda fountain.

" 'Here! here! you'll kill him,' says he, so I hauls him aboard, drippin' and clingy, wringin' him out good and thorough—by the neck. He made a fine mop.

"These clippings," continued "Bitter Root," fishing into his pocket, "tell in beautiful figgers how the last seen of 'Oily' Heegan he was holystoning the deck of a sooty little tugboat under the admonishments and feet of 'Bitter Root' Billings of Montana, and they state how the strikers tried to get tugs for pursuit and couldn't, and how, all day long, from the housetops was visible a tugboat mad-

ly cruising about inside the outer cribs bustin' the silence with joyful blasts of victory, and they'll further state that about dark she steamed up the river, tired and draggled, with a bony-lookin' cowboy inhalin' cigareets on the stern-bits, holding a three-foot knotted rope in his lap. When a delegation of strikers met her, inquiren' about one D. O'Hara Heegan, it says like this," and Billings read laboriously as follows:

"Then the bronzed and lanky man arose with a smile of rare contentment, threw overboard his cigarette, and approaching the boiler-room hatch, called loudly: "Come out of that," and the President of the Federation of Fresh Water Firemen dragged himself wearily out into the flickering lights. He was black and drenched and streaked with sweat; also, he shone with the grease and oils of the engines, while the palms of his hands were covered with painful blisters from unwonted, intimate contact with shovels and drawbars. It was seen that he winced fearfully as the cowboy twirled the rope end.

"'He's got the makin's of a fair fireman,'" said the stranger, "'all he wants is practice.'"

"Then, as the delegation murmured angrily, he held up his hand and, in the ensuing silence, said:

"'Boys, the strike's over. Mr. Heegan has arbitrated.'"



THE SHYNESS OF SHORTY

BAILEY smoked morosely as he scanned the dusty trail leading down across the "bottom" and away over the dry gray prairie toward the hazy mountains in the west.

From his back-tilted chair on the veranda, the road was visible for miles, as well as the river trail from the south, sneaking up through the cottonwoods and leprous sycamores.

He called gruffly into the silence of the house, and his speech held the surliness of his attitude.

"Hot Joy! Bar X outfit comin'. Git supper."

A Chinaman appeared in the door and gazed at the six-mule team descending the distant gully to the ford.

"Jesse one man, hey? All light," and slid quietly back to the kitchen.

Whatever might be said, or, rather, whatever might be suspected, of Bailey's roadhouse—for people did not run to wordy conjecture in this country—it was known that it boasted a good cook, and this atoned for a catalogue of shortcomings. So it waxed popular among the hands of the big cattle ranges near by. Those given to idle talk held that Bailey

acted strangely at times, and rumor painted occasional black doings at the hacienda, squatting vulture-like above the ford, but it was nobody's business, and he kept a good cook.

Bailey did not recall the face that greeted him from above the three span as they swung in front of his corral, but the brand on their flanks was the Bar X, so he nodded with as near an approach to hospitality as he permitted.

It was a large face, strong-featured and rugged, balanced on wide, square shoulders, yet some oddness of posture held the gaze of the other till the stranger clambered over the wheel to the ground. Then Bailey removed his brier and heaved tempestuously in the throes of great and silent mirth.

It was a dwarf. The head of a Titan, the body of a whisky barrel, rolling ludicrously on the tiny limbs of a bug, presented so startling a sight that even Hot Joy, appearing around the corner, cackled shrilly. His laughter rose to a shriek of dismay, however, as the little man made at him with the rush and roar of a cannon ball. In Bailey's amazed eyes he seemed to bounce galvanically, landing on Joy's back with such vicious suddenness that the breath fled from him in a squawk of terror; then, seizing his cue, he kicked and belabored the prostrate Celestial in feverish silence. He desisted and rolled across the porch to Bailey. Staring truculently up at the landlord, he spoke for the first time.

"Was I right in supposin' that something amused you?"

Bailey gasped incredulously, for the voice rumbled heavily an octave below his own bass. Either the look of the stocky catapult, as he launched himself on the fleeing servant, or the invidious servility of the innkeeper, sobered the landlord, and he answered gravely:

"No, sir; I reckon you're mistaken. I ain't observed anything frivolous yet."

"Glad of it," said the little man. "I don't like a feller to hog a joke all by himself. Some of the Bar X boys took to absorbin' humor out of my shape when I first went to work, but they're sort of educated out of it now. I got an eye from one and a finger off of another; the last one donated a ear."

Bailey readily conceived this man as a bad antagonist, for the heavy corded neck had split buttons from the blue shirt, and he glimpsed a chest hairy and round as a drum, while the brown arms showed knotty and hardened.

"Let's liquor," he said, and led the way into the big, low room, serving as bar, dining, and living room. From the rear came vicious clatterings and slammings of pots, mingled with Oriental lamentations, indicating an aching body rather than a chastened spirit.

"Don't see you often," he continued, with a touch of implied curiosity, which grew as his guest, with lingering fondness, up-ended a glass brimful of the raw, fiery spirits.

"No, the old man don't lemme get away much. He knows that dwellin' close to the

ground, as I do, I pine for spiritual elevation," with a melting glance at the bottles behind the bar, doing much to explain the size of his first drink.

"Like it, do ye?" questioned Bailey, indicating the shelf.

"Well, not exactly! Booze is like air—I need it. It makes a new man out of me—and usually ends by gettin' both me and the new one laid off."

"Didn't hear nothing of the weddin' over at Los Huecos, did ye?"

"No! Whose weddin'?"

"Ross Turney, the new sheriff."

"Ye don't say! Him that's been elected on purpose to round up the Tremper gang, hey? Who's his antagonist?"

"Old man Miller's gal. He's celebratin' his election by gettin' spliced. I been expectin' of 'em across this way to-night, but I guess they took the Black Butte trail. You heard what he said, didn't ye? Claims that inside of ninety days he'll rid the county of the Trempers and give the reward to his wife for a bridal present. Five thousand dollars on 'em, you know." Bailey grinned evilly and continued: "Say! Marsh Tremper'll ride up to his house some night and make him eat his own gun in front of his bride, see if he don't. Then there'll be cause for an inquest and an election." He spoke with what struck the teamster as unnecessary heat.

"Dunno," said the other; "Turney's a brash young feller, I hear, but he's game. 'Tain't

any of my business, though, and I don't want none of his contrac'. I'm violently addicted to peace and quiet, I am. Guess I'll unhitch," and he toddled out into the gathering dusk to his mules, while the landlord peered uneasily down the darkening trail.

As the saddened Joy lit candles in the front room, there came the rattle of wheels without and a buckboard stopped in the bar of light from the door. Bailey's anxiety was replaced by a mask of listless surprise as the voice of Ross Turney called to him.

"Hello there, Bailey! Are we in time for supper? If not, I'll start an insurrection with that Boxer of yours. He's got to turn out the snortingest supper of the season to-night. It isn't every day your shack is honored by a bride. Mr. Bailey, this is my wife, since ten o'clock A. M." He introduced a blushing, happy girl, evidently in the grasp of many emotions. "We'll stay all night, I guess."

"Sure," said Bailey. "I'll show ye a room," and he led them up beneath the low roof where an unusual cleanliness betrayed the industry of Joy.

The two men returned and drank to the bride, Turney with the reckless lightness that distinguished him, Bailey sullen and watchful.

"Got another outfit here, haven't you?" questioned the bridegroom. "Who is it?"

Before answer could be made, from the kitchen arose a tortured howl and the smashing of dishes mingled with stormy rumblings.

The door burst inward, and an agonized Joy fled, flapping out into the night, while behind him rolled the caricature from Bar X.

"I just stopped for a drink of water," boomed the dwarf, then paused at the twitching face of the sheriff.

He swelled ominously, like a great pigeon, purple and congested with rage. Strutting to the new-comer, he glared insolently up into his smiling face.

"What are ye laughin' at, ye shavetail?" His hands were clenched, till his arms showed tense and rigid, and the cords in his neck were thickly swollen.

"Lemme in on it, I'm strong on humor. What in —— ails ye?" he yelled, in a fury, as the tall young man gazed fixedly and the glasses rattled at the bellow from the barreled-up lungs.

"I'm not laughing at you," said the sheriff.

"Oh, ain't ye?" mocked the man of peace.

"Well, take care that ye don't, ye big wart, or I'll trample them new clothes and browse around on some of your features. I'll take ye apart till ye look like cut feed. Guess ye don't know who I am, do ye? I'm——"

"Who is this man, Ross?" came the anxious voice of the bride, descending the stairs.

The little man spun like a dancer, and, spying the girl, blushed to the color of a prickly pear, then stammered painfully, while the sweat stood out under the labor of his discomfort:

"Just 'Shorty,' Miss," he finally quavered.

"Plain 'Shorty' of the Bar X—er—a miserable, crawlin' worm for disturbin' of you." He rolled his eyes helplessly at Bailey, while he sopped with his crumpled sombrero at the glistening perspiration.

"Why didn't ye tell me?" he whispered ferociously at the host, and the volume of his query carried to Joy, hiding out in the night.

"Mr. Shorty," said the sheriff gravely; "let me introduce my wife, Mrs. Turney."

The bride smiled sweetly at the tremulous little man, who broke and fled to a high bench in the darkest corner, where he dangled his short legs in a silent ecstasy of bashfulness.

"I reckon I'll have to rope that Chink, then blindfold and back him into the kitchen, if we git any supper," said Bailey, disappearing.

Later the Chinaman stole in to set the table, but he worked with hectic and fitful energy, a fearful eye always upon the dim bulk in the corner, and at a fancied move he shook with an ague of apprehension. Backing and sideling, he finally announced the meal, prepared to stampede madly at notice.

During the supper Shorty ate ravenously of whatever lay to his hand, but asked no favors. The agony of his shyness paralyzed his huge vocal muscles till speech became a labor quite impossible.

To a pleasant remark of the bride he responded, but no sound issued, then breathing heavily into his larynx, the reply roared upon them like a burst of thunder, seriously threatening the gravity of the meal. He retired ab-

ruptly into moist and self-conscious silence, fearful of feasting his eyes on this disturbing loveliness.

As soon as compatible with decency, he slipped back to his bunk in the shed behind, and lay staring into the darkness, picturing the amazing occurrences of the evening. At the memory of her level glances he fell a-tremble and sighed ecstatically, prickling with a new, strange emotion. He lay till far into the night, wakeful and absorbed. He was able to grasp the fact but dimly that all this dazzling perfection was for one man. Were it not manifestly impossible he supposed other men in other lands knew other ladies as beautiful, and it furthermore grew upon him blackly, in the thick gloom, that in all this world of womanly sweetness and beauty, no modicum of it was for the misshapen dwarf of the Bar X outfit. All his life he had fought furiously to uphold the empty shell of his dignity in the eyes of his comrades, yet always morbidly conscious of the difference in his body. Whisky had been his solace, his sweetheart. It changed him, raised and beatified him into the likeness of other men, and now, as he pondered, he was aware of a consuming thirst engendered by the heart of his earlier emotions. Undoubtedly it must be quenched.

He rose and stole quietly out into the big front room. Perhaps the years of free life in the open had bred a suspicion of walls, perhaps he felt his conduct would not brook discovery, perhaps habit prompted him to take

the two heavy Colts from their holsters and thrust them inside his trousers band.

He slipped across the room, silent and cavern-like, its blackness broken by the window squares of starry sky, till he felt the paucity of glassware behind the bar.

"Here's to Her." It burned delightfully.

"Here's to the groom." It tingled more alluringly.

"I'll drink what I can, and get back to the bunk before it works," he thought, and the darkness veiled the measure of his potations.

He started at a noise on the stairway. His senses not yet dulled, detected a stealthy tread. Not the careless step of a man unafraid, but the cautious rustle and halt of a marauder. Every nerve bristled to keenest alertness as the faint occasional sounds approached, passed the open end of the bar where he crouched, leading on to the window. Then a match flared, and the darkness rushed out as a candle wick sputtered.

Shorty stretched on tiptoe, brought his eye to the level of the bar, and gazed upon the horrent head of Bailey. He sighed thankfully, but watched with interest his strange behavior.

Bailey moved the light across the window from left to right three times, paused, then wigwagged some code out into the night.

"He's signalling," mused Shorty. "Hope he gets through quick. I'm getting full." The fumes of the liquor were beating at his

senses, and he knew that soon he would move with difficulty.

The man, however, showed no intention of leaving, for, his signals completed, he blew out the light, first listening for any sound from above, then his figure loomed back and immobile against the dim starlight of the window.

"Oh, Lord! I got to set down," and the watcher squatted upon the floor, bracing against the wall. His dulling perceptions were sufficiently acute to detect shuffling footsteps on the porch and the cautious unbarring of the door.

"Gettin' late for visitors," he thought, as he entered a blissful doze. "When they're abed, I'll turn in."

It seemed much later that a shot startled him. To his dizzy hearing came the sound of curses overhead, the stamp and shift of feet, the crashing fall of struggling men, and, what brought him unsteadily to his legs, the agonized scream of a woman. It echoed through the house, chilling him, and dwindled to an aching moan.

Something was wrong, he knew that, but it was hard to tell just what. He must think. What hard work it was to think, too; he'd never noticed before what a laborious process it was. Probably that sheriff had got into trouble; he was a fresh guy, anyhow; and he'd laughed when he first saw Shorty. That settled it. He could get out of it himself. Evidently it was nothing serious, for there was no

more disturbance above, only confused murmurs. Then a light showed on the stairs, and again the shuffling of feet came, as four strange men descended. They were lighted by the sardonic Bailey, and they dragged a sixth between them, bound and helpless. It was the sheriff.

Now, what had he been doing to get into such a fix?

The prisoner stood against the wall, white and defiant. He strained at his bonds silently, while his captors watched his futile struggles. There was something terrible and menacing in the quietness with which they gloated—a suggestion of some horror to come. At last he desisted, and burst forth:

"You've got me all right. You did this, Bailey, you—traitor."

"He's never been a traitor, as far as we know," sneered one of the four. "In fact, I might say he's been strictly on the square with us."

"I didn't think you made war on women, either, Marsh Tremper, but it seems you're everything from a dog-thief down. Why couldn't you fight me alone, in the daylight, like a man?"

"You don't wait till a rattler's coiled before you stamp his head off," said the former speaker. "It's either you or us, and I reckon it's you."

So these were the Tremper boys, eh? The worst desperadoes in the Southwest; and Bailey was their ally. The watcher eyed them,

mildly curious, and it seemed to him that they were as bad a quartette as rumor had painted—bad, even, for this country of bad men. The sheriff was a fool for getting mixed up with such people. Shorty knew enough to mind *his* own business, anyway, if others didn't. He was a peaceful man, and didn't intend to get mixed up with outlaws. His mellow meditations were interrupted by the hoarse speech of the sheriff, who had broken down into his rage again, and struggled madly while words ran from him.

"Let me go!—you, let me free. I want to fight the coward that struck my wife. You've killed her. Who was it? Let me get at him."

Shorty stiffened as though a douche of ice-water had struck him. "Killed her! Struck his wife!" My God! Not that sweet creature of his dreams who had talked and smiled at him without noting his deformity——

An awful anger rose in him and he moved out into the light.

"Han' sup!"

Whatever of weakness may have dragged at his legs, none sounded in the great bellowing command that flooded the room. At the compelling volume of the sound every man whirled and eight empty hands shot skyward. Their startled eyes beheld a man's squat body weaving uncertainly on the limbs of an insect, while in each hand shone a blue-black Colt that waved and circled in maddening, erratic orbits.

At the command, Marsh Tremper's mind

had leaped to the fact that behind him was one man; one against five, and he took a gambler's chance.

As he whirled, he drew and fired. None but the dwarf of Bar X could have lived, for he was the deadliest hip shot in the territory. His bullet crashed into the wall, a hand's breadth over Shorty's "cow-lick." It was a clean heart shot; the practised whirl and flip of the finished gun fighter; but the roar of his explosion was echoed by another, and the elder Tremper spun unsteadily against the table with a broken shoulder.

"Too high," moaned the big voice. "—the liquor."

He swayed drunkenly, but at the slightest shift of his quarry the aimless wanderings of a black muzzle stopped on the spot and the body behind the guns was congested with deadly menace.

"Face the wall," he cried. "Quick! Keep 'em up higher!" They sullenly obeyed; their wounded leader reaching with his uninjured member.

To the complacent Shorty, it seemed that things were working nicely, though he was disturbingly conscious of his alcoholic lack of balance, and tortured by the fear that he might suddenly lose the iron grip of his faculties.

Then, for the second time that night, from the stairs came the voice that threw him into the dreadful confusion of his modesty.

"Oh, Ross!" it cried, "I've brought your gun," and there on the steps, dishevelled, pal-

lid and quivering, was the bride, and grasped in one trembling hand was her husband's weapon.

"Ah—h!" sighed Shorty, seraphically, as the vision beat in upon his misty conceptions. "*She ain't hurt!*"

In his mind there was no room for desperadoes contemporaneously with Her. Then he became conscious of the lady's raiment, and his brown cheeks flamed brick-red, while he dropped his eyes. In his shrinking, groveling modesty, he made for his dark corner.

One of those at bay, familiar with his strange abashment, seized the moment, but at his motion the sheriff screamed: "Look out!"

The quick danger in the cry brought back with a surge the men against the wall and Shorty swung instantly, firing at the outstretched hand of Bailey as it reached for Tremper's weapon.

The landlord straightened, gazing affrightedly at his finger tips.

"Too low!" and Shorty's voice held aching tears. "I'll never touch another drop; it's plumb ruined my aim."

"Cut these strings, girlie," said the sheriff, as the little man's gaze again wavered, threatening to leave his prisoners.

"Quick. He's blushing again."

When they were manacled, Shorty stood in moist exudation, trembling and speechless, under the incoherent thanks of the bride and the silent admiration of her handsome husband. She fluttered about him in a tremor of

anxiety, lest he be wounded, caressing him here and there with solicitous pats till he felt his shamed and happy spirit would surely burst from its misshapen prison.

"You've made a good thing to-night," said Turney, clapping him heartily on his massive back. "You get the five thousand all right. We were going to Mexico City on that for a bridal trip when I rounded up the gang, but I'll see you get every cent of it, old man. If it wasn't for you I'd have been a heap farther south than that by now."

The open camaraderie and good-fellowship that rang in the man's voice affected Shorty strangely, accustomed as he was to the veiled contempt or open compassion of his fellows. Here was one who recognized him as a man, an equal.

He spread his lips, but the big voice squeaked dismally, then, inflating deeply, he spoke so that the prisoners chained in the corral outside heard him plainly.

"I'd rather she took it anyhow," blushing violently.

"No, no," they cried. "It's yours."

"Well, then, half of it"—and for once Shorty betrayed the strength of Gibraltar, even in the face of the lady, and so it stood.

As the dawn spread over the dusty prairie, tipping the westward mountains with silver caps, and sucking the mist out of the cottonwood bottoms, he bade them adieu.

"No, I got to get back to the Bar X, or the old man'll swear I been drinking again, and I

66 NORTH OF FIFTY-THREE

don't want to dissipate no wrong impressions around." He winked gravely. Then, as the sheriff and his surly prisoners drove off, he called:

"Mr. Turney, take good care of them Trempers. I think a heap of 'em for, outside of your wife, they're the only ones in this outfit that didn't laugh at me."



THE TEST

PIERRE "FÈROCE" showed disapproval in his every attitude as plainly as disgust peered from the seams in his dark face; it lurked in his scowl and in the curl of his long rawhide that bit among the sled dogs. So at least thought Willard, as he clung to the swinging sledge.

They were skirting the coast, keeping to the glare ice, wind-swept and clean, that lay outside the jumbled shore pack. The team ran silently in the free gait of the gray wolf, romping in harness from pure joy of motion and the intoxication of perfect life, making the sled runners whine like the song of a cutlass.

This route is dangerous, of course, from hidden cracks in the floes, and most travellers hug the bluffs, but he who rides with Pierre "Fèroce" takes chances. It was this that had won him the name of "Wild" Pierre—the most reckless, tireless man of the trails, a scoffer at peril, bolting through danger with rush and frenzy, overcoming sheerly by vigor those obstacles which destroy strong men in the North.

The power that pulsed within him gleamed from his eyes, rang in his song, showed in the aggressive thrust of his sensual face.

This particular morning, however, Pierre's

distemper had crystallized into a great contempt for his companion. Of all trials, the most detestable is to hit the trail with half a man, a pale, anemic weakling like this stranger.

Though modest in the extent of his learning, Pierre gloated in a freedom of speech, the which no man dared deny him. He turned to eye his companion cynically for a second time, and contempt was patent in his gaze. Willard appeared slender and pallid in his furs, though his clear-cut features spoke a certain strength and much refinement.

"Bah! I t'ink you dam poor feller," he said finally. "'Ow you 'goin' stan' thees trip, eh? She's need beeg mans, not leetle runt like you."

Amusement at his frankness glimmered in Willard's eyes.

"You're like all ignorant people. You think in order to stand hardship a man should be able to toss a sack of flour in his teeth or juggle a case of salt-horse."

"Sure t'ing," grinned Pierre. "That's right. Look at me. Mebbe you hear 'bout Pierre 'Fèroce' sometime, eh?"

"Oh, yes; everybody knows you; knows you're a big bully. I've seen you drink a quart of this wood alcohol they call whisky up here, and then jump the bar from a stand, but you're all animal—you haven't the refinement and the culture that makes real strength. It's the mind that makes us stand punishment."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the Canadian,

"W'at a fonny talk. She'll take the heducate man for stan' the col', eh? Mon Dieu!" He roared again till the sled dogs turned fearful glances backward and bushy tails drooped under the weight of their fright. Great noise came oftenest with great rage from Pierre, and they had too frequently felt the both to forget.

"Yes, you haven't the mentality. Sometime you'll use up your physical resources and go to pieces like a burned wick."

Pierre was greatly amused. His yellow teeth shone, and he gave vent to violent mirth as, following the thought, he pictured a naked mind wandering over the hills with the quicksilver at sixty degrees.

"Did you ever see a six-day race? Of course not; you barbarians haven't sunk to the level of our dissolute East, where we joy in Roman spectacles, but if you had you'd see it's will that wins; it's the man that eats his soul by inches. The educated soldier stands the campaign best. You run too much to muscle—you're not balanced."

"I t'ink mebbe you'll 'ave chance for show 'im, thees stout will of yours. She's goin' be long 'mush' troo the mountains, plentee snow, plentee cold."

Although Pierre's ridicule was galling, Willard felt the charm of the morning too strongly to admit of anger or to argue his pet theory.

The sun, brilliant and cold, lent a paradoxical cheerfulness to the desolation, and, though never a sign of life broke the stillness around

them, the beauty of the scintillant, gleaming mountains, distinct as cameos, that guarded the bay, appealed to him with the strange attraction of the Arctics; that attraction that calls and calls insistently, till men forsake God's country for its mystery.

He breathed the biting air cleaned by leagues of lifeless barrens and voids of crackling frost till he ached with the exhilaration of a perfect morning on the Circle.

Also before him undulated the grandest string of dogs the Coast had known. Seven there were, tall and gray, with tails like plumes, whom none but Pierre could lay hand upon, fierce and fearless as their master. He drove with the killing cruelty of a stamper, and they loved him.

"You say you have grub cached at the old Indian hut on the Good Hope?" questioned Willard.

"Sure! Five poun' bacon, leetle flour and rice. I cache one gum-boot too, ha! Good thing for make fire queeck, eh?"

"You bet; an old rubber boot comes handy when it's too cold to make shavings."

Leaving the coast, they ascended a deep and tortuous river where the snow lay thick and soft. One man on snow-shoes broke trail for the dogs till they reached the foothills. It was hard work, but infinitely preferable to that which followed, for now they came into a dangerous stretch of overflows. The stream, frozen to its bed, clogged the passage of the spring water beneath, forcing it up through

cracks till it spread over the solid ice, forming pools and sheets covered with treacherous ice-skins. Wet feet are fatal to man and beast, and they made laborious detours, wallowing trails through tangled willows waist deep in the snow smother, or clinging precariously to the overhanging bluffs. As they reached the river's source the sky blackened suddenly, and great clouds of snow rushed over the bleak hills, boiling down into the valley with a furious draught. They flung up their flimsy tent, only to have it flattened by the force of the gale that cut like well-honed steel. Frozen spots leaped out white on their faces, while their hands stiffened ere they could fasten the guy strings.

Finally, having lashed the tent bottom to the protruding willow tops, by grace of heavy lifting they strained their flapping shelter up sufficiently to crawl within.

"By Gar! She's blow hup ver' queeck," yelled Pierre, as he set the ten-pound sheet-iron stove, its pipe swaying drunkenly with the heaving tent.

"Good t'ing she hit us in the brush." He spoke as calmly as though danger was distant, and a moment later the little box was roaring with its oil-soaked kindlings.

"Will this stove burn green willow tops?" cried Willard.

"Sure! She's good stove. She'll burn hickles eef you get 'im start one times. See 'im get red?"

They rubbed the stiff spots from their

cheeks, then, seizing the axe, Willard crawled forth into the storm and dug at the base of the gnarled bushes. Occasionally a shrub assumed the proportions of a man's wrist—but rarely. Gathering an armful, he bore them inside, and twisting the tips into withes, he fed the fire. The frozen twigs sizzled and snapped, threatening to fail utterly, but with much blowing he sustained a blaze sufficient to melt a pot of snow. Boiling was out of the question, but the tea leaves became soaked and the bacon cauterized.

Pierre freed and fed the dogs. Each gulped its dried salmon, and, curling in the lee of the tent, was quickly drifted over. Next he cut blocks from the solid bottom snow and built a barricade to windward. Then he accumulated a mow of willow tops without the tent-fly. All the time the wind blew down the valley like the breath of a giant bellows.

"Supper," shouted Willard, and as Pierre crawled into the candle-light he found him squatted, fur-bundled, over the stove, which settled steadily into the snow, melting its way downward toward a firmer foundation.

The heat was insufficient to thaw the frozen sweat in his clothes; his eyes were bleary and wet from smoke, and his nose needed continuous blowing, but he spoke pleasantly, a fact which Pierre noted with approval.

"We'll need a habeas corpus for this stove if you don't get something to hold her up, and I might state, if it's worthy of mention, that your nose is frozen again."

Pierre brought an armful of stones from the creek edge, distributing them beneath the stove on a bed of twisted willows; then swallowing their scanty, half-cooked food, they crawled, shivering, into the deerskin sleeping-bags, that animal heat might dry their clammy garments.

Four days the wind roared and the ice filings poured over their shelter while they huddled beneath. When one travels on rations delay is dangerous. Each morning, dragging themselves out into the maelstrom, they took sticks and poked into the drifts for dogs. Each animal as found was exhumed, given a fish, and became straightway reburied in the whirling white that seethed down from the mountains.

On the fifth, without warning, the storm died, and the air stilled to a perfect silence.

"These dog bad froze," said Pierre, swearing earnestly as he harnessed. "I don't like eet much. They goin' play hout I'm 'fraid." He knelt and chewed from between their toes the ice pellets that had accumulated. A malamute is hard pressed to let his feet mass, and this added to the men's uneasiness.

As they mounted the great divide, mountains rolled away on every hand, barren, desolate, marble white; always the whiteness; always the listening silence that oppressed like a weight. Myriads of creek valleys radiated below in a bewildering maze of twisted seams.

"Those are the Ass's Ears, I suppose," said Willard, gazing at two great fangs that bit

deep into the sky-line. "Is it true that no man has ever reached them?"

"Yes. The hinjun says that's w'ere hall the storm come from, biccuse w'en the win' blow troo the Ass's Ear, look out! Somebody goin' ketch 'ell."

Dogs' feet wear quickly after freezing, for crusted snow cuts like a knife. Spots of blood showed in their tracks, growing more plentiful till every print was a crimson stain. They limped pitifully on their raw pads, and occasionally one whined. At every stop they sank in their tracks, licking their lacerated paws, rising only at the cost of much whipping.

On the second night, faint and starved, they reached the hut. Digging away the drifts, they crawled inside to find it half full of snow—snow which had sifted through the crevices. Pierre groped among the shadows and swore excitedly.

"What's up?" said Willard.

Vocal effort of the simplest is exhausting when spent with hunger, and these were the first words he had spoken for hours.

"By Gar! she's gone. Somebody stole my grub!"

Willard felt a terrible sinking, and his stomach cried for food.

"How far is it to the Crooked River Road House?"

"One long day drive—forty mile."

"We must make it to-morrow or go hungry, eh? Well this isn't the first dog fish I ever

ate." Both men gnawed a mouldy dried salmon from their precious store.

As Willard removed his footgear he groaned.

"W'at's the mattair?"

"I froze my foot two days ago—snow-shoe strap too tight." He exhibited a heel from which, in removing his inner sock, the flesh and skin had come away.

"That's all right," grinned Pierre. "You got the beeg will lef' yet. It takes the heducate man for stan' the col', you know."

Willard gritted his teeth.

They awoke to the whine of a gray wind-storm that swept the cutting snow in swirling clouds and made travel a madness. The next day was worse.

Two days of hunger weigh heavy when the cold weakens, and they grew gaunt and fell away in their features.

"I'm glad we've got another feed for the dogs," remarked Willard. "We can't let *them* run hungry, even if *we* do."

"I t'ink she's be hall right to-mor'," ventured Pierre. "Thees ain't snow—jus' win'; bimeby all blow hout. Sacré! I'll can eat 'nuff for 'ole harmy."

For days both men had been cold, and the sensation of complete warmth had come to seem strange and unreal, while their faces cracked where the spots had been.

Willard felt himself on the verge of collapse. He recalled his words about strong men, gazing the while at Pierre. The Cana-

dian evinced suffering only in the haggard droop of eye and mouth; otherwise he looked strong and dogged.

Willard felt his own features had shrunk to a mask of loose-jawed suffering, and he set his mental sinews, muttering to himself.

He was dizzy and faint as he stretched himself in the still morning air upon waking, and hobbled painfully, but as his companion emerged from the darkened shelter into the crystalline brightness he forgot his own misery at sight of him. The big man reeled as though struck when the dazzle from the hills reached him, and he moaned, shielding his sight. Snow-blindness had found him in a night.

Slowly they plodded out of the valley, for hunger gnawed acutely, and they left a trail of blood tracks from the dogs. It took the combined efforts of both men to lash them to foot after each pause. Thus progress was slow and fraught with agony.

As they rose near the pass, miles of Arctic wastes bared themselves. All about towered bald domes, while everywhere stretched the monotonous white, the endless snow unbroken by tree or shrub, pallid and menacing, maddening to the eye.

"Thank God, the worst's over," sighed Willard, flinging himself onto the sled. "We'll make it to the summit next time; then she's down hill all the way to the road house."

Pierre said nothing.

Away to the northward glimmered the Ass's

Ears, and as the speaker eyed them carelessly he noted gauzy shreds and streamers veiling their tops. The phenomena interested him, for he knew that here must be wind—wind, the terror of the black tundra; the hopeless, merciless master of the barrens! However, the distant range beneath the twin peaks showed clear-cut and distinct against the sky, and he did not mention the occurrence to the guide, although he recalled the words of the Indians: "Beware of the wind through the Ass's Ears."

Again they labored up the steep slope, wallowing in the sliding snow, straining silently at the load; again they threw themselves, exhausted, upon it. Now, as he eyed the panorama below, it seemed to have suffered a subtle change, indefinable and odd. Although but a few minutes had elapsed, the coast mountains no longer loomed clear against the horizon, and his visual range appeared foreshortened, as though the utter distances had lengthened, bringing closer the edge of things. The twin peaks seemed endlessly distant and hazy, while the air had thickened as though congested with possibilities, lending a remoteness to the landscape.

"If it blows up on us here, we're gone," he thought, "for it's miles to shelter and we're right in the saddle of the hills."

Pierre, half blinded as he was, arose uneasily and cast the air like a wild beast, his great head thrown back, his nostrils quivering.

"I smell the win'," he cried. "Mon Dieu! She's goin' blow!"

A volatile pennant floated out from a nearby peak, hanging about its crest like faint smoke. Then along the brow of the pass writhed a wisp of drifting, twisting flakelets, idling hither and yon, astatic and aimless, settling in a hollow. They sensed a thrill and rustle to the air, though never a breath had touched them; then, as they mounted higher, a draught fanned them, icy as interstellar space. The view from the summit was grotesquely distorted, and glancing upward they found the guardian peaks had gone a-smoke with clouds of snow that whirled confusedly, while an increasing breath sucked over the summit, stronger each second. Dry snow began to rustle slothfully about their feet. So swiftly were the changes wrought, that before the mind had grasped their import the storm was on them, roaring down from every side, swooping out of the boiling sky, a raging blast from the voids of sunless space.

Pierre's shouts as he slashed at the sled lashings were snatched from his lips in scattered scraps. He dragged forth the whipping tent and threw himself upon it with the sleeping-bags. Having cut loose the dogs, Willard crawled within his sack and they drew the flapping canvas over them. The air was twilight and heavy with efflorescent granules that hurtled past in a drone.

They removed their outer garments that the fur might fold closer against them, and lay

exposed to the full hate of the gale. They hoped to be drifted over, but no snow could lodge in this hurricane, and it shifted past, dry and sharp, eddying out a bare place wherein they lay. Thus the wind drove the chill to their bones bitterly.

An unnourished human body responds but weakly, so, vitiated by their fast and labors, their suffering smote them with tenfold cruelty.

All night the north wind shouted, and, as the next day waned with its violence undiminished, the frost crept in upon them till they rolled and tossed shivering. Twice they essayed to crawl out, but were driven back to cower for endless, hopeless hours.

It is in such black, aimless times that thought becomes distorted. Willard felt his mind wandering through bleak dreams and tortured fancies, always to find himself harping on his early argument with Pierre: "It's the mind that counts." Later he roused to the fact that his knees, where they pressed against the bag, were frozen; also his feet were numb and senseless. In his acquired consciousness he knew that along the course of his previous mental vagary lay madness, and the need of action bore upon him imperatively.

He shouted to his mate, but "Wild" Pierre seemed strangely apathetic.

"We've got to run for it at daylight. We're freezing. Here! Hold on! What are you doing? Wait for daylight!" Pierre had scrambled stiffly out of his cover and his gab-

blings reached Willard. He raised a clenched fist into the darkness of the streaming night, cursing horribly with words that appalled the other.

"Man! man! don't curse your God. This is bad enough as it is. Cover up. Quick!"

Although apparently unmindful of his presence, the other crawled back muttering.

As the dim morning grayed the smother they rose and fought their way downward toward the valley. Long since they had lost their griping hunger, and now held only an apathetic indifference to food, with a cringing dread of the cold and a stubborn sense of their extreme necessity..

They fell many times, but gradually drew themselves more under control, the exercise suscitating them, as they staggered downward, blinded and buffeted, their only hope the road house.

Willard marvelled dully at the change in Pierre. His face had shrivelled to blackened freezes stretched upon a bony substructure, and lighted by feverish, glittering, black, black eyes. It seemed to him that his own lagging body had long since failed, and that his aching, naked soul wandered stiffly through the endless day. As night approached Pierre stopped frequently, propping himself with legs far apart; sometimes he laughed. Invariably this horrible sound shocked Willard into a keener sense of the surroundings, and it grew to irritate him, for the Frenchman's mental wanderings increased with the

darkness. What made him rouse one with his awful laughter? These spells of walking insensibility were pleasanter far. At last the big man fell. To Willard's mechanical endeavors to help he spoke sleepily, but with the sanity of a man under great stress.

"Dat no good. I'm goin' freeze right 'ere—freeze stiff as 'ell. Au revoir."

"Get up!" Willard kicked him weakly, then sat upon the prostrate man as his own faculties went wandering.

Eventually he roused, and digging into the snow buried the other, first covering his face with the ample parka hood. Then he struck down the valley. In one lucid spell he found he had followed a sled trail, which was blown clear and distinct by the wind that had now almost died away.

Occasionally his mind grew clear, and his pains beat in upon him till he grew furious at the life in him which refused to end, which forced him ever through this gauntlet of misery. More often he was conscious only of a vague and terrible extremity outside of himself that goaded him forever forward. Anon he strained to recollect his destination. His features had set in an implacable grimace of physical torture—like a runner in the fury of a finish—till the frost hardened them so. At times he fell heavily, face downward, and at length upon the trail, lying so, till that omnipresent coercion that had frozen in his brain drove him forward.

He heard his own voice mauding through

lifeless lips like that of a stranger: "The man that can eat his soul will win, Pierre."

Sometimes he cried like a child and slaver ran from his open mouth, freezing at his breast. One of his hands was going dead. He stripped the left mitten off and drew it laboriously over the right. One he would save at least, even though he lost the other. He looked at the bare member dully, and he could not tell that the cold had eased till the bitterness was nearly out of the air. He labored with the fitful spurts of a machine run down.

Ten men and many dogs lay together in the Crooked River Road House through the storm. At late bedtime of the last night came a scratching on the door.

"Somebody's left a dog outside," said a teamster, and rose to let him in. He opened the door only to retreat affrightedly.

"My God!" he said. "My God!" and the miners crowded forward.

A figure tottered over the portal, swaying drunkenly. They shuddered at the sight of its face as it crossed toward the fire. It did not walk; it shuffled, haltingly, with flexed knees and hanging shoulders, the strides measuring inches only—a grisly burlesque upon senility.

Pausing in the circle, it mumbled thickly, with great effort, as though gleaning words from infinite distance:

"Wild Pierre—frozen—buried—in—snow—hurry!" Then he straightened and spoke strongly, his voice flooding the room.

"It's the mind, Pierre. Ha! ha! ha! The mind."

He cackled hideously, and plunged forward into a miner's arms.

It was many days before his delirium broke. Gradually he felt the pressure of many bandages upon him, and the hunger of convalescence. As he lay in his bunk the past came to him hazy and horrible; then the hum of voices, one loud, insistent, and familiar.

He turned weakly, to behold Pierre propped in a chair by the stove, frost-scarred and pale, but aggressive even in recuperation. He gesticulated fiercely with a bandaged hand, hot in controversy with some big-limbed, bearded strangers.

"Bah! You fellers no good—too beeg in the che', too leetle in the forehead. She'll tak' the heducate mans for stan' the 'ardsheep—lak' me an' Meestaire Weelard."



WHERE NORTHERN LIGHTS COME DOWN O' NIGHTS

THE Mission House at Togiak stands forlornly on a wind-swept Alaskan spit, while huddled around it a swarm of dirt-covered "igloos" grovel in an ecstasy of abasement.

Many natives crawled out of these and stared across the bay as down a gully came an Arctic caravan, men and dogs, black against the deadly whiteness. Ahead swung the guide, straddling awkwardly on his five-foot webs, while the straining pack pattered at his heels. Big George, the driver, urged them with strong words, idioms of the Northland, and his long whip bit sharply at their legs.

His companion, clinging to the sled, stumbled now and then, while his face, splitting from the snap of the frost, was smothered in a muffler. Sometimes he fell, plunging into the snow, rising painfully, and groaning with the misery of "snow-blindness."

"Most there now, Cap, keep up your grit."

"I'm all right," answered the afflicted man, wearily. "Don't mind me."

George, too, had suffered from the sheen of the unbroken whiteness, and, while his eyes

had not wholly closed, he saw but dimly. His cheeks were grease-smeared, and blackened with charred wood to break the snow-glare, but through his mask showed signs of suffering, while his blood-shot eyes dripped scalding tears and throbbed distressfully. For days he had not dared to lose sight of the guide. Once he had caught him sneaking the dogs away, and he feared he had killed the man for a time. Now Jaska broke trail ahead, his sullen, swollen features baleful in their injury.

Down the steep bank they slid, across the humped-up sea ice at the river mouth and into the village.

At the greeting of their guide to his tribesmen, George started. Twelve years of coast life had taught him the dialect from Point Barrow south, and he glanced at Captain to find whether he, too, had heard the message. As Jaska handed a talisman to the chief he strode to him and snatched it.

‘Oho! It’s Father Orloff, is it? D—— him!’ He gazed at the token, a white spruce chip with strange marks and carvings.

‘What does it mean, George?’ said the blind man.

‘It’s a long story, Charlie, and black. You should have known it before we started. I’m a marked man in this coast country. It’s Orloff’s work, the renegade. ‘Father,’ he calls himself. Father to these devils he rules and robs for himself in the name of the Church. His hate is bitter, and he’d have my life if

these water-livered curs didn't dread the sound of my voice. God help him when we meet."

He shook his hairy claws at the hostile circle, then cried to the chief in the native tongue:

"Oh, Shaman! We come bleeding and weary. Hunger grips us and our bones are stiff with frost. The light is gone from my brother's eyes and we are sick. Open you the door to the Mission House that the 'Minoks' may rest and grow strong."

The Indians clustered before the portal, with its rude cross above, and stared malignantly, while the chief spoke. At the name of his enemy the unsightly eyes of George gleamed, and he growled contemptuously, advancing among them. They scattered at the manner of his coming, and he struck the padlocked door till it rattled stiffly. Then spying the cross overhead he lifted up and gripped the wood. It came away ripping, and with wails of rage and horror at the sacrilege, they closed about him.

"Here, Cap! Burst her in quick!" He dragged Captain before the entrance, thrusting the weapon upon him, then ran ferociously among the people. He snatched them to him, cuffing like a bear and trampling them into the snow. Those who came into the reach of his knotty arms crumpled up and twisted under his feet. He whirled into the group, roaring hoarsely, his angry, grease-blackened face hideous with rage. The aborigine is not

a fighting machine; for him the side-step and counter have no being. They melted ahead of his blazing wrath, and he whisked them, fleeing, by their garments, so that they felt the stamp of his moccasined heels.

Captain dragged the team within, and George, following, blocked the shattered door.

"We're safe as long as we stay in the Church," said he.

"Right of sanctuary, eh? Does it occur to you how we're going to get out?"

"Never mind, we'll get out somehow," said he, and that night, as Charlie Captain, late University man and engineer, lay with eyes swathed in steaming cloths, the whaler spoke operosely and with the bitterness of great wrong.

"It happened when we rocked the bars of Forty Mile, before ever a Chechako had crossed the Chilcoot. I went over to the headwaters of the Tanana. Into the big valley I went and got lost in the Flats. 'Tis a wild country, rimmed by high mountains, full of niggerheads and tundra, with the river wind-in' clean back to the source of the Copper. I run out of grub. We always did them days, and built a raft to float down to the Yukon. A race with starvation, and a dead heat it near proved, too, though I had a shade the best of it. I drifted out into the main river, ravin' mad, my 'Mukluks' eat off and my moose-hide gun cover inside of me.

"A girl spied me from the village, and 'twas her brought me ashore in her birch-bark

and tended me in her wick-i-up till reason came and the blood ran through me again.

"I mind seein' a white man stand around at times and hearin' him beg her to leave me to the old squaws. She didn't though. She gave me bits of moose meat and berries and dried salmon, and when I come to one day I saw she was little and brown and pleadin' and her clothes all covered with beads. Her eyes was big and sad, Cap, and dimples poked into her cheeks when she laughed.

"'Twas then that Orloff takes a hand—the white man. A priest he called himself; breed, Russian. Maybe he was, but a blacker hearted thief never wronged a child. He wanted the girl, Metla, and so did I. When I asked her old man for her he said she was promised to the Russian. I laughed at him, and a chief hates to be mocked. You know what sway the Church has over these Indians. Well, Orloff is a strong man. He held 'em like a rock. He worked on 'em till one day the tribesmen came to me in a body and said, 'Go!'

"'Give me the girl, and I will,' says I.

"Orloff sneered. 'She was mine for a month before ye came,' says he with the fiend showin' back of his eyes. 'Do ye want her now?'

"For a minute I believed him. I struck once to kill, and he went down. They closed on me as fast as I shook 'em off. 'Twas a beautiful sight for a ruction, on the high banks over the river, but I was like water

from the sickness. I fought to get at their priest where he lay, to stamp out his grinning face before they downed me, but I was beat back to the bluff and I battled with my heels over the edge. I broke a pole from the fish-rack and a good many went down. Then I heard Metla calling softly from below:

"'Jump!' she said. 'Big one, jump.'"

"She had loosed a canoe at the landing and now held it in the boiling currents underneath, paddling desperately.

"As they ran out of the tents with their rifles I leaped.

"A long drop and cold water, but I hit feet first. When I rose the little girl was alongside.

"It's a ticklish thing to crawl over the stern of a canoe in the spatter of slugs, with the roar of muzzle-loaders above. It's shakin' to the nerves, but the maid never flinched, not even when a bullet split the gunnel. She ripped a piece of her dress and plugged a hole under the water line while I paddled out of range.

"The next winter at Holy Cross she ran to me shaking one day.

"'He is here! He is here! Big man, I am afraid!'

"'Who's here?' says I.

"'He is here—Father Orloff,' and her eyes was round and scared so that I took her up and kissed her while she clung to me—she was such a little girl.

"'He spoke to me at the water-hole, 'I have come for you.' I ran very fast, but he came

behind. "Where is George?" ' he said.

"I went out of the cabin down to the Mission, and into the house of Father Barnum. He was there.

" 'Orloff! What do ye want?' I says.

"Father Barnum speaks up—'he's known for a good man the length of the river. George,' says he, 'Father Orloff tells me you stole the girl Metla from her tribe. 'Tis a shameful thing for a white to take a red girl for his wife, but it's a crime to live as you do.'

" 'What?' says I.

" 'We can't sell you provisions nor allow you to stay in the village.'

"Orloff grins. 'You must go on,' he says, 'or give her up.'

" 'No! I'll do neither.' And I shows the paper from the missionary at Nulato statin' that we were married. 'She's my wife,' says I, 'and too good for me. She's left her people and her gods, and I'll care for her.' I saw how it hurt Orloff, and I laid my hand on his shoulder close to the neck. 'I distrust ye, and sure as Fate ye'll die the shocking death if ever harm comes to the little one.'

"That was the winter of the famine, though every winter was the same then, and I went to Anvik for grub—took all the strong men and dogs in the village. I was afraid when I left, too, for 'twas the time I should have been with her, but there was no one else to go.

" 'When you come back,' she said, "there will be another—a little boy—and he will grow mighty and strong, like his father.' She

hung her arms around me, Cap, and I left with her kisses warm on my lips.

"It was a terrible trip, the river wet with overflows and the cut-offs drifted deep, so I drove back into Holy Cross a week late with bleedin' dogs and frozen Indians strainin' at the sled ropes.

"I heard the wail of the old women before I come to the cabin, and when Metla had sobbed the story out in her weakness, I went back into the dark and down to the Mission. I remember how the Northern Light flared over the hills above, and the little spruces on the summit looked to me like headstones, black against the moon—and I laughed when I saw the snow red in the night glare, for it meant blood and death.

"It was as lusty a babe as ever crowed, but Orloff had come to the sick bed and sent her squaws away. Baptism and such things he said he'd do. The little fellow died that night.

"They say the Mission door was locked and barred, but I pushed through it like paper and came into Father Barnum's house, where they sat. Fifty below is bad for the naked flesh. I broke in, bare-headed, mittenless, and I'd froze some on the way down. He saw murder in my eyes and tried to run, but I got him as he went out of the room. He tore his throat loose from my stiffened fingers and went into the Church, but I beat down the door with my naked fists, mocking at his prayers inside, and may I never be closer to death than Orloff was that night.

"Then a squaw tugged at my parka.

" 'She is dying, Anguk,' she said, and I ran back up the hill with the cold bitin' at my heart.

"There was no death that night in Holy Cross, though God knows one naked soul was due to walk out onto the snow. At daylight, when I came back for him, he had fled down the river with the fastest dogs, and to this day I've never seen his face, though 'tis often I've felt his hate.

"He's grown into the strongest missionary on the coast, and he never lets a chance go by to harry me or the girl.

"D'ye mind the time 'Skagway' Bennet died? We was pardners up Norton Sound way when he was killed. They thought he suicided, but I know. I found a cariboo belt in the brush near camp—the kind they make on the Kuskokwim, Father Orloff's country. His men took the wrong one, that's all.

"I'm sorry I didn't tell ye this, Cap, before we started, for now we're into the South Country, where he owns the natives. He knows we've come, as the blood-token of the guide showed. He wants my life, and there's great trouble comin' up. I'm hopin' ye'll soon get your sight, for by now there's a runner twenty miles into the hills with news that we're blind in the church at Togiak. Three days he'll be goin', and on the fifth ye'll hear the jangle of Russian dog-bells. He'll kill the fastest team in Nushagak in the comin', and God help us if we're here."

George scraped a bit of frost-lace from the lone window pane. Dark figures moved over the snow, circling the chapel, and he knew that each was armed. Only their reverence for the church held them from doing the task set by Orloff, and he sighed as he changed the bandages on his suffering mate.

They awoke the ~~next~~ morning to the moan of wind and the sift of snow clouds past their walls. Staring through his peep-hole, George distinguished only a seethe of whirling flakes that grayed the view, blotting even the neighboring huts, and when the early evening brought a rising note in the storm the trouble lifted from his face.

"A three-day blizzard," he rejoiced, "and the strongest team on the coast can't wallow through it under a week. These on-shore gales is beauts."

For three days the wind tore from off the sea into the open bight at whose head lay Togiak, and its violence wrecked the armor of shore ice in the bay till it beat and roared against the spit, a threshing maelstrom of shattered bergs. The waters piled into the inlet driven by the lash of the storm till they overflowed the river ice behind the village, submerging and breaking it into ragged, dangerous confusion.

On the third day, with Arctic vagary, the wind gasped reluctantly and scurried over the range. In its wake the surging ocean churned loudly and the back-water behind the town, held by the dam of freezing slush-ice at the

river mouth, was skimmed by a thin ice-paper, pierced here and there by the up-ended piles from beneath. This held the night's snow, so that morning showed the village girt on three sides by a stream soft-carpeted and safe to the eye, but failing beneath the feet of a child.

"Your eyes are comin' along mighty slow," worried George. "I'm hopin' his reverence is up to his gills in drifts back yonder. We must leave him a sled trail for a souvenir."

"How can we, with the place guarded?"

"Hitch the dogs and run for it by night. He'll burn us out when he comes. Fine targets we'd make on the snow by the light of a burning shack. If ye can see to shoot we'll go tonight. Hello! What's that?"

Outside came the howl of malamutes and the cry of men. Leaping to the window, George rubbed it free and stared into the sunshine.

"Too late! Too late!" he said. "Here he comes! It's time I killed him." He spoke gratingly, with the dull anger of years.

On the bright surface of the opposite hillside a sled bearing a muffled figure appeared silhouetted against the glisten of the crust. Its team, maddened by the village scent, poured down the incline toward the river bank and the guide swung onto the runners behind, while the voice of the people rose to their priest. In a whirl of soft snow they drove down onto the treachery of the ice. The

screams of the natives frenzied the pack and they rioted out onto the bending sheet, while the long sledge, borne by its momentum, shot forward till the splitting cry of the ice sounded over the lamentations. It slackened, sagged and disappeared in a surge of congealing waters. The wheel dogs were dragged into the opening and their mates ahead jerked backward onto them. In a fighting tangle, all settled into the swirl.

Orloff leaped from the sinking sled, but hindered by his fur swaddling, crashed through and lunged heavily in his struggles to mount the edge of the film. As he floundered onto the caving surface it let him back and the waters covered him time and again. He pitched oddly about, and for the first time they saw his eyes were bound tightly with bandages, which he strove to loosen.

"My God! He's snow-blind!" cried George, and in a moment he appeared among the frantic mob fringing the shore.

The guide broke his way toward a hummock of old ice forming an islet near by, and the priest half swam, half scrambled behind, till they crawled out upon this solid footing. Here the wintry wind searched them and their dripping clothes stiffened quickly. Orloff dragged the strips from his face, and as the sun glitter pierced his eyes he writhed as though seared by the naked touch of hot steel.

He shouted affrightedly in his blindness, but the mocking voice of Big George answer-

ed him and he cowered at the malevolence in the words.

"Here I am, Orloff. It's help ye want, is it? I'll shoot the man that tries to reach ye. Ha, ha! You're freezin', eh? Georgie will talk to keep ye awake. A dirty trick of the river to cheat me so. I've fattened for years on the hope of stampin' your life out and now it's robbed me. But I'll stick till ye're safe in Hell."

The man cried piteously, turning his bleared eyes toward the sound.

"Shoot, why don't you, and end it? Can't you see we're freezing?" He stood up in his carapace of stiffened clothes, shivering palsiedly.

"The truest thing ye ever said," cried George, and he swung his Colts into view. "It'll favor you and I'll keep my vow." He raised the gun. The splashing of the distant dogs broke the silence. A native knelt stiffly.

"George! George!" Captain had stumbled down among them and plucked at his arm, peering dimly into his distorted face. "Great God, are you a murderer? They'll be dead before we can save them."

"Save 'em?" said George, while reason fought with his mania. "Whose goin' to save 'em? He needs killin'. I'm hungry for his life."

"He's a man, George. They're both human, and they're dying in sight of us. Give him a chance. Fight like a man."

As he spoke the fury fell away from the

whaler and he became the alert, strong man of the frontier, knowing the quick danger and meeting it.

He bellowed at the natives and they fled backward before his voice, storming the cache where lay the big skin canoes. They slid one down, and seizing paddles, crushed the ice around it till it floated, then supported by the prow, George stamped the ice into fragments ahead, and they forced their way slowly along the channel he made. Soaked to the armpits he smashed a trail through which they reached the hummock where the others lay, too listless for action.

At the shore they bore the priest to their shelter while the guide was snatched into a near-by hut. They hacked off his brittle clothes and supported him to the bed. As he walked his feet clattered on the board floor like the sound of wooden shoes. They were white and solid, as were his hands.

"He's badly frozen," whispered Captain, "can we save him?" They rubbed and thawed for hours, but the sluggish blood refused to flow into the extremities and Captain felt that this man would die for lack of amputation.

Through all the Russian was silent, gazing strangely at George.

"'Tis no use," finally said the big man, despairingly, "I've seen too many of 'em; we've done our best."

He disappeared, and there sounded the jingle of harness as the dogs were hitched. As he entered for the camp outfit Orloff spoke:

"George Brace, I've harmed you bitterly these many years, and you're a good man to help me so. It's no use. We have both fought the Cold Death, and know when to quit. I came here to kill you, but you will go out across the mountains, free, while I rave in madness and the medicine men make charms over me. When you come into Bethel Mission I'll be dead. Good-bye."

"Good Hell! We're takin' ye to Bethel and a doctor in ten minutes. A week's travel as the trail goes, but we'll save a chunk of ye yet, old man."

Five days later a broken team crawled over the snow to the Moravian Mission, urged by two men gaunt from the trail, and blistered by the cold. From the sledge came shrieks and throaty mutterings, horrid gabblings of post-freezing madness, and Dr. Forrest, lifting back the robe, found Orloff lashed into his couch.

"Five days from Togiak. Two hundred miles in heavy trails," explained George wearily, as the cries of the maniac dimmed behind the log walls.

Two hours later Forrest spoke gravely as they nursed their frost bites in his room.

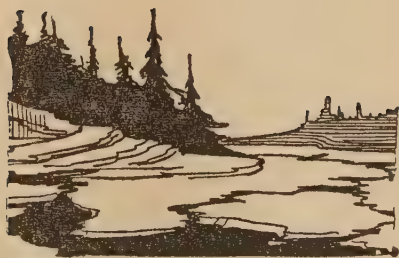
"We have operated. He will recover."

"It's a sad, sad day," mourned George. "It just takes the taste out of everything for me. He's a cripple now, eh?"

"Yes! Helpless! I did not know Father Orloff had many—er—friends hereabout," continued the doctor. "He was thought to be

hated by the whites. I'm glad the report was wrong."

"Friends be damned," said the other strongly. "What's a friend? Ye can get them any place, but where can ye find another enemy like that man?"



THE SCOURGE

COMING down coast from the Kotzebue country they stumbled onto the little camp in the early winter, and as there was food aplenty, of its kind, whereas they had subsisted for some days on purée of seal oil and short ribs of dog, Captain and Big George decided to winter. A maxim of the north teaches to cabin by a grub-pile.

It was an odd village they beheld that first day. Instead of the clean moss-chinked log shelters men were wont to build in this land, they found the community housed like marmots in holes and burrows.

It seemed that the troop had landed, fresh from the States, a hundred and a quarter strong, hot with the lust for gold, yet shaken by the newspaper horrors of Alaska's rigorous hardships and forbidding climate.

Debouching in the early fall, they had hastily prepared for an Associated Press-painted Arctic winter.

Had they been forced to winter in the mountains of Idaho, or among Montana's passes, they would have prepared simply and effectively. Here, however, in a mystic land, surrounded by the unknown, they grew panic stricken and lost their wits.

Thus, when the two "old-timers" came upon

them in the early winter they found them in bomb-proof hovels, sunk into the muck, banked with log walls, and thatched over with dirt and sod.

"Where are your windows and ventilators?" they were asked, and collectively the camp laughed at the question. *They* knew how to keep snug and warm even if half-witted "sour-doughs" didn't. *They* weren't taking any chances on freezing, not on your tin-type, no outdoor work and exposure for them!

As the winter settled, they snuggled back, ate three meals and more daily of bacon, beans, and baking-powder bread; playing cribbage for an appetite. They undertook no exercise more violent than seven-up, while the wood-cutting fell as a curse upon those unfortunates who lost at the game. They giggled at Captain and the big whaler who daily, snow or blow, hit the trail or wielded pick and shovel.

However, as the two maintained their practice, the camp grew to resent their industry, and, as is possible only in utterly idle communities, there sprung up a virulence totally out of proportion, and, founded without reason, most difficult to dispel. Before they knew it, the two were disliked and distrusted; their presence ignored; their society shunned.

Captain had talked to many in the camp.

"You'll get scurvy, sure, living in these dark houses. They're damp and dirty, and you don't exercise. Besides, there isn't a pound of fresh grub in camp."

Figuratively, the camp's nose had tilted at

this, and it stated pompously that it were better to preserve its classic purity of features and pro rata of toes, than to jeopardize these adjuncts through fear of a possible blood disease.

"Blood disease, eh?" George snorted like a sea-lion. "Wait till your legs get black and you spit your teeth out like plum-pits—mebbe you'll listen then. It'll come, see if it don't."

He was right. Yet when the plague did grip the camp and men died, one in five, they failed to rise to it. Instead of fighting manfully they lapsed into a frightened, stubborn coma.

There was one, and only one, who did not. Klusky the Jew; Klusky the pariah. They said he worked just to be ornery and different from the rest, he hated them so. They enjoyed baiting him to witness his fury. It sated that taint of Roman cruelty inherent in the man of ignorance. He was all the amusement they had, for it wasn't policy to stir up the two others—they might slop over and clean up the village. So they continued to goad him as they had done since leaving 'Frisco. They gibed and jeered till he shunned them, living alone in the fringe of the pines, bitter and vicious, as an outcast from the pack will grow, whether human or lupine. He frequented only the house of Captain and George, because they were exiles like himself.

The partners did not relish this overmuch, for he was an odious being, avaricious, carping, and dirty.

"His face reminded me of a tool," said George, once, "nose an' chin shut up like calipers. He's got the forehead of a salmon trout, an' his chin don't retreat, it stampedes, plumb down ag'in his apple. Look out for that droop of the mouth. I've seen it before, an' his eyes is bad, too. They've stirred him up an' pickled all the good he ever done. Some day he'll do a murder."

"I wonder what he means by always saying he'll have revenge before spring. It makes me creep to hear him cackle and gloat. I think he's going crazy."

"Can't tell. This bunch would burst anybody's mental tugs, an' they make a mistake drivin' him so. Say! How's my gums look tonight?" George stretched his lips back, showing his teeth, while Captain made careful examination.

"All right. How are mine?"

"Red as a berry."

Every day they searched thus for the symptoms, looking for discoloration, and anxiously watching bruises on limb or body. Men live in fear when their comrades vanish silently from their midst. Each night upon retiring they felt legs nervously, punching here and there to see that the flesh retained its resiliency.

So insidious is the malady's approach that it may be detected only thus. A lassitude perhaps, a rheumatic laziness, or pains and swelling at the joints. Maybe one notes a putty-like softness of the lower limbs. Where he presses, the finger mark remains, filling up

sluggishly. No mental depression at first, nor fever, only a drooping ambition, fatigue, enlarging parts, now gradual, now sudden.

The grim humor of seeing grown men gravely poking their legs with rigid digits, or grinning anxiously into hand-mirrors had struck some of the tenderfeet at first, but the implacable progress of the disease; its black, merciless presence, pausing destructively here and there, had terrorized them into a hopeless fatalism till they cowered helplessly, awaiting its touch.

One night Captain announced to his partner, "I'm going over to the Frenchmen's, I hear Menard is down."

"What's the use of buttin' in where ye ain't wanted? As fer me, them frogeaters can all die like salmon; I won't go nigh 'em an' I've told 'em so. I give 'em good advice, an' what'd I get? What'd that daffy doctor do? Pooh-poohed at me an' physicked them. Lord! Physic a man with scurvy—might as well bleed a patient fer amputation." George spoke with considerable heat.

Captain pulled his parka hood well down so that the fox-tails around the edge protected his features, and stepped out into the evening. He had made several such trips in the past few months to call on men smitten with the sickness, but all to no effect. Being "chech-akos" they were supreme in their conceit, and refused to heed his advice.

Returning at bed time he found his partner webbing a pair of snow-shoes by the light of a

stinking "go-devil," consisting of a string suspended in a can of molten grease. The camp had sold them grub, but refused the luxury of candles. Noting his gravity, George questioned:

"Well, how's Menard?"

"Dead!" Captain shook himself as though at the memory. "It was awful. He died while I was talking to him."

"Don't say! How's that?"

"I found him propped up in a chair. He looked bad, but said he was feeling fine."

"That's the way they go. I've seen it many a time—feelin' fine plumb to the last."

"He'd been telling me about a bet he had with Promont. Promont was taken last week, too, you know, same time. Menard bet him twenty dollars that he'd outlast him."

"'I'm getting all right,' says he, 'but poor Promont's going to die. I'll get his twenty, sure!' I turned to josh with the boy a bit, an' when I spoke to Menard he didn't answer. His jaw had sagged and he'd settled in his chair. Promont saw it, too, and cackled. 'H'I 'ave win de bet! H'I 'ave win de bet!' That's all. He just slid off. Gee! It was horrible."

George put by his work and swore, pacing the rough pole floor.

"Oh, the cussed fools! That makes six dead from the one cabin—six from eighteen, an' Promont'll make seven to-morrow. Do ye mind how we begged 'em to quit that dug-out an' build a white man's house, an' drink

spruce tea, an' *work*? They're too—lazy. They lie around in that hole, breathe bad air, an' rot."

"And just to think, if we only had a crate of potatoes in camp we could save every man jack of 'em. Lord! They never even brought no citric acid nor lime juice—nothin'! If we hadn't lost our grub when the whale-boat upset, eh? That ten-gallon keg of booze would help some. Say! I got such a thirst I don't never expect to squench it proper"; he spoke plaintively.

"Klusky was here again while you was gone, too. I itch to choke that Jew whenever he gets to ravin' over these people. He's sure losin' his paystreak. He gritted his teeth an' foamed like a mad malamute, I never see a low-downer lookin' aspect than him when he gets mad."

"'I'll make 'em come to me,' says he, 'on their bellies beggin'. It ain't time yet. Oh, no! Wait 'till half of 'em is dead, an' the rest is rotten with scurvy. Then they'll crawl to me with their gums thick and black, an' their flesh like dough; they'll kiss my feet an' cry, an' I'll stamp 'em into the snow!' You'd ought a heard him laugh. Some day I'm goin' to lay a hand on that man, right in my own house."

As they prepared for bed, Captain remarked:

"By the way, speaking of potatoes, I heard to-night that there *was* a crate in the Frenchmen's outfit somewhere, put in by mistake,

perhaps, but when they boated their stuff up river last fall it couldn't be found—must have been lost."

It was some days later that, returning from a gameless hunt, Captain staggered into camp, weary from the drag of his snow-shoes.

Throwing himself into his bunk he rested while George prepared the meagre meal of brown beans, fried salt pork, and sour-dough bread. The excellence of this last, due to the whaler's years of practice, did much to mitigate the unpleasantness of the milkless, butterless, sugarless menu.

Captain's fatigue prevented notice of the other's bearing. However, when he had supped and the dishes were done George spoke, quietly and without emotion.

"Well, boy, the big thing has come off."

"What do you mean?"

For reply he took the grease dip and, holding it close, bared his teeth.

With a cry Captain leaped from his bunk, and took his face between his hands.

"Great God! George!"

He pushed back his lips. Livid blotches met his gaze—the gums swollen and discolored. He dropped back sick and pale, staring at his bulky comrade, dazed and uncomprehending.

Carefully replacing the lamp, George continued:

"I felt it comin' quite a while back, pains in my knees an' all that—thought mebbe you'd notice me hobblin' about. I can't git around

good—feel sort of stove up an' spavined on my feet."

"Yes, yes, but we've lived clean, and exercised, and drank spruce tea, and—everything," cried the other.

"I know, but I've had a touch before; it's in my blood, I reckon. Too much salt grub; too many winters on the coast. She never took me so sudden an' vicious though. Guess the stuff's off."

"Don't talk that way," said Captain, sharply. "You're not going to die—I won't let you."

"Vat's the mattaire?" came a leering voice and, turning, they beheld Klusky, the renegade. He had entered silently, as usual, and now darted shrewd inquiring glances at them.

"George has the scurvy."

"Oi! Oi! Oi! Vat a peety." He seemed about to say more but refrained, coming forward rubbing his hands nervously.

"It ain't possible that a 'sour dough' shall have the scoivy."

"Well, he has it—has it bad but, I'll cure him. Yes, and I'll save this whole——camp, whether they want it or not." Captain spoke strongly, his jaws set with determination. Klusky regarded him narrowly through close shrunk eyes, while speculation wrinkled his low forehead.

"Of course! Yes! But how shall it be, eh? Tell me that." His eagerness was pronounced.

"I'll go to St. Michaels and bring back fresh grub."

"You can't do it, boy," said George. "It's too far an' there ain't a dog in camp. You couldn't haul your outfit alone, an' long before you'd sledded grub back I'll be wearin' one of them gleamin' orioles, I believe that's what they call it, on my head, like the pictures of them little fat angelettes. I ain't got no ear for music, so I'll have to cut out the harp solos."

"Quit that talk, will you?" said Captain irritably. "Of course, one man can't haul an outfit that far, but two can, so I'm going to take Klusky with me." He spoke with finality, and the Jew started, gazing queerly. "We'll go light, and drive back a herd of reindeer."

"By thunder! I'd clean forgot the reindeer. The government was aimin' to start a post there last fall, wasn't it? Say! Mebbe you can make it after all, Kid." His features brightened hopefully. "What d' ye say, Klusky?"

The one addressed answered nervously, almost with excitement.

"It can't be done! It ain't possible, and I ain't strong enough to pull the sled. V'y don't you and George go together? "I'll stay——"

Captain laid a heavy hand on his shoulder.

"That'll do. What are you talking about? George wouldn't last two days, and you know it. Now listen. You don't have to go, you infernal greasy dog, there are others in camp, and one of them will go if I walk him at the muzzle of a gun. I gave you first chance, be-

cause we've been good to you. Now get out."

He snatched him from his seat and hurled him at the door, where he fell in a heap.

Klusky arose, and, although his eyes snapped wildly and he trembled, he spoke insidiously, with oily modulation.

"Vait a meenute, Meestaire Captain, vait a meenute. I didn't say I wouldn't go. Oi! Oi! Vat a man! Shoor I'll go. Coitenly! You have been good to me and they have been devils. I hope they die." He shook a bony fist in the direction of the camp, while his voice took on its fanatical shrillness. "They shall be in h—— before I help them, the pigs, but you—ah, you have been my friends, yes?"

"All right, be here by daylight," said Captain gruffly. Anger came slowly to him, and its trace was even slower in its leaving.

"I don't like him," said George, when he had slunk out. "He ain't on the level. Watch him close, boy, he's up to some devilment."

"Keep up your courage, old man. I'll be back in twelve days." Captain said it with decision, though his heart sank as he felt the uncertainties before him.

George looked squarely into his eyes.

"God bless ye, boy," he said. "I've cabined with many a man, but never one like you. I'm a hard old nut, an' I ain't worth what you're goin' to suffer, but mebbe you can save these other idiots. That's what we're put here for, to help them as is too ornery to help themselves." He smiled at Captain, and the young

man left him blindly. He seldom smiled, and to see it now made his partner's breast heave achingly.

"Good old George!" he murmured as they pulled out upon the river. "Good old George!" As they passed from the settlement an Indian came to the door of the last hovel.

"Hello. There's a Siwash in your cabin," said Captain. "What is he doing there?"

"That's all right," rejoined Klusky. "I told him to stay and vatch t'ings."

"Rather strange," thought the other. "I wonder what there is to watch. There's never been any stealing around here."

To the unversed, a march by sled would seem simplicity. In reality there is no more discouraging test than to hit the trail, dogless and by strength of back. The human biped cannot drag across the snow for any distance more than its own weight, hence equipment is of the simplest. At that, the sledge rope galls one's neck with a continual, endless, yielding drag, resulting in back pains peculiar to itself. It is this eternal maddening pull, with the pitiful crawling gait that tells; horse's labor and a snail's pace. The toil begets a perspiration which the cold solidifies midway through the garments. At every pause the clammy clothes grow chill, forcing one forward, onward, with sweating body and freezing face. In extreme cold, snow pulverizes dryly till steel runners drag as though slid through sand. Occasional overflows bar the stream from bank to bank, resulting in wet

feet and quick changes by hasty fires to save numb toes. Now the air is dead under a smother of falling flakes that fluff up ankle deep, knee deep, till the sled plunges along behind, half buried, while the men wallow and invent ingenious oaths. Again the wind whirls it by in grotesque goblin shapes; wonderful storm beings, writhing, whipping, biting as they pass; erasing bank and mountain. Yet always there is that aching, steady tug of the shoulder-rope, stopping circulation till the arms depend numbly; and always the weary effort of trail breaking.

Captain felt that he had never worked with a more unsatisfying team mate. Not that Klusky did not pull, he evidently did his best, but he never spoke, while the other grew ever conscious of the beady, glittering eyes boring into his back. At camp, the Jew watched him furtively, sullenly, till he grew to feel oppressed, as with a sense of treachery, or some fell design hidden far back. Every morning he secured the ropes next the sled, thus forcing Captain to walk ahead. He did not object to the added task of breaking trail, for he had expected the brunt of the work, but the feeling of suspicion increased till it was only by conscious effort that he drove himself to turn his back upon the other and take up the journey.

It was this oppression that warned him on the third day. Leaning as he did against the sled ropes he became aware of an added burden, as though the man behind had eased to

shift his harness. When it did not cease he glanced over his shoulder. Keyed up as he was this nervous agility saved him.

Klusky held a revolver close up to his back, and, though he had unconsciously failed to pull, he mechanically stepped in the other's tracks. The courage to shoot had failed him momentarily, but as Captain turned, it came, and he pulled the trigger.

Frozen gun oil has caused grave errors in calculation. The hammer curled back wickedly and stuck. Waiting his chance he had carried the weapon in an outer pocket where the frost had stiffened the grease. Had it been warmed next his body, the fatal check would not have occurred. Even so, he pulled again and it exploded sharp and deafening in the rarefied morning air. In that instant's pause, however, Captain had whirled so that the bullet tore through the loose fur beneath his arm. He struck, simultaneously with the report, and the gun flew outward, disappearing in the snow.

They grappled and fell, rolling in a tangle of rope, Klusky fighting with rat-like fury, whining odd, broken curses. The larger man crushed him in silence, beating him into the snow, bent on killing him with his hands.

As the other's struggles diminished, he came to himself, however, and desisted.

"I can't kill him," he thought in panic. "I can't go on alone."

"Get up!" He kicked the bleeding figure till it arose lamely. "Why did you do that?"

His desire to strangle the life from him was overpowering.

The man gave no answer, muttering only unintelligible jargon, his eyes ablaze with hatred.

"Tell me." He shook him by the throat but received no reply. Nor could he, try as he pleased; only a stubborn silence. At last, disgusted and baffled, he bade him resume the rope. It was necessary to use force for this, but eventually they took up the journey, differing now only in their order of precedence.

"If you make a move I'll knife you," he cautioned grimly. "That goes for the whole trip, too."

At evening he searched the grub kit, breaking knives and forks, and those articles which might be used as means of offence, throwing the pieces into the snow.

"Don't stir during the night, or I might kill you. I wake easy, and hereafter we'll sleep together." Placing the weapons within his shirt, he bound the other's wrists and rolled up beside him.

Along the coast, their going became difficult from the rough ice and soft snow, and with despair Captain felt the days going by. Klusky maintained his muteness and, moreover, to the anger of his captor, began to shirk. It became necessary to beat him. This Captain did relentlessly, deriving a certain satisfaction from it, yet marvelling the while at his own cruelty. The Jew feigned weariness, and began to limp as though foot-sore.

Captain halted him at last.

"Don't try that game," he said. "It don't go. I spared your life for a purpose. The minute you stop pulling, that minute I'll sink this into your ribs." He prodded him with his sheath knife. "Get along now, or I'll make you haul it alone." He kicked him into resentful motion again, for he had come to look upon him as an animal, and was heedless of his signs of torture—so thus they marched; master and slave. "He's putting it on," he thought, but abuse as he might, the other's efforts became weaker, and his agony more marked as the days passed. The morning came when he refused to arise.

"Get up!"

Klusky shook his head.

"Get up, I say!" Captain spoke fiercely, and snatched him to foot, but with a groan the man sank back. Then, at last, he talked.

"I can't do it. I can't do it. My legs make like they von't vork. You can kill me, but I can't walk."

As he ceased, Captain leaned down and pushed back his lips. The teeth were loose and the gums livid.

"Great Heavens, what have I done! *What have I done!*" he muttered.

Klusky had watched his face closely.

"Vat's the mattaire? Vy do you make like that, eh? Tell me." His voice was sharp.

"You've got it."

"I've got it? Oi! Oi! I've got it! Vat have I got?" He knew before the answer

came, but raved and cursed in frenzied denial. His tongue started, language flowed from him freely.

"It ain't that. No! No! It is the rheumatisen. Yes, it shall be so. It makes like that from the hard vork always. It is the cold—the cold makes it like."

With despair Captain realized that he could neither go on, dragging the sick man and outfit, nor could he stay here in idleness to sacrifice the precious days that remained to his partner. Each one he lost might mean life or death.

Klusky broke in upon him.

"You von't leave me, Mistaire Captain? Please you von't go away?"

Such frightened entreaty lay in his request that before thinking the other replied,

"No, I won't. I made you come and I'll do all I can for you. Maybe somebody will pass." He said it only to cheer, for no one travelled this miserable stretch save scattering, half-starved Indians, but the patient caught at it eagerly, hugging the hope to his breast during the ensuing days.

That vigil beside the dying creature lived long in Captain's memory. The bleak, timberless shores of the bay; their tiny tent, crouched fearfully among the willow tops; the silent nights, when in the clear, cold air the stars stared at him close and big, like eyes of wolves beyond a camp fire; the days of endless gabblings from the sinking man, and the all-pervading cold.

At last, knowledge dawned upon the invalid, and he called his companion to his side. Shivering there beneath the thin tent, Captain heard a story, rambling at first, filled with hatred and bitterness toward the men who had scoffed at him, yet at the last he listened eagerly, amazedly, and upon its conclusion rose suddenly, gazing at the dying man in horror.

"My God, Klusky! Hell isn't black enough for you. It can't be true, it *can't* be. You're raving! Do you mean to say that you let those poor devils die like rats while you had potatoes in your cabin, fresh ones? Man! Man! The juice of every potato was worth a life. You're lying, Klusky."

"I ain't. No, I ain't. I hate them! I said they should crawl on their bellies to me. Yes, and I should wring the money out. A hundred dollars for von potato. I stole them all. Ha! ha! and I kept them varm. Oh, yes! Always varm by the fires, so they shall be good and fine for the day."

"That's why you left the Indian there when we came away, eh? To keep a fire."

"Shoor! and I thought I shall kill you and go back alone so nobody shall make for the rescue. Then I should have the great laugh."

Captain bared his head to the cold outside the tent. He was dazed by the thought of it. The man was crazed by abuse. The camp had paid for its folly!

Then a hope sprang up in him. It was too late to go on and return with the deer; that is, too late for George, and he thought only of

him; of the big, brave man sitting alone in the cabin, shunned by the others, waiting quietly for his coming, tracing the relentless daily march of the disease. Why didn't the Jew die so he could flee back? He had promised not to desert him, and he could not break his word to a dying man, even though the wretch deserved damnation. But why couldn't he die? What made him hang on so? In his idle hours he arranged a pack for the start, assembling his rations. He could not be hampered by the sled. This was to be a race—he must travel long and fast. The sick man saw the preparations, and cried weakly, the tears freezing on his cheeks, and still he lingered, lingered maddeningly, till at last, when Captain had lost count of the days, he passed without a twitch and, before the body had cooled, the northward bluffs hid the plodding, snow-shoed figure hurrying along the back trail.

He scarcely stopped for sleep or food, but gnawed raw bacon and frozen bread, swinging from shoe to shoe, devouring distance with the steady, rhythmic pace of a machine. He made no fires. As darkness settled, rendering progress a peril, he unrolled his robe, and burrowed into some overhanging drift, and the earliest hint of dawn found him miles onward.

Though the weather was clear, he grew numbed and careless under the strain of his fatigue, so that the frost bit hungrily at his features. He grew gaunt, and his feet swelled

from the snow-shoe thongs till they puffed out his loose, sealskin boots, and every step in the morning hours brought forth a groan.

He was tortured by the thought that perhaps the Indian had carelessly let go the fire in Klusky's cabin. If so, the precious potatoes would freeze in a night. Then, if the native rebuilt it, he would arrive only to find a mushy, putrifying mass, worse than useless. The uncertainty sickened him, and at last, as he sighted the little hamlet, he paused, bracing his legs apart weakly.

He searched fearfully for traces of smoke above Klusky's cabin. There were none. Somehow the lone shack seemed to stare malignantly at him, as he staggered up the trail, and he heard himself muttering. There were no locks in this land, so he entered unbidden. The place was empty, though warm from recent habitation. With his remaining strength he scrambled up a rude ladder to the loft where he fumbled in the dark while his heart stopped. Then he cried hoarsely and, ripping open the box, stuffed them gloatingly into pockets and shirt front. He dropped from the platform and fled out through the open door, capless and mittenless; out and on toward the village.

His pace slackened suddenly, for he noted with a shock that, like Klusky's cabin, no smoke drifted over the house toward which he ran, and, drawing near, he saw that snow lay before the door; clean, white, and untrodden. He was too dazed to recall the light fall of

the night previous, but glared blankly at the idle pipe; at the cold and desolate front.

"Too late!" he murmured brokenly. "Too late!" and stumbled to the snow-cushioned chopping block.

He dared not go in. Evidently the camp had let George die; had never come near to lift a hand. He was afraid of what lay within, afraid to face it alone. Yet a dreadful need to know pulled him forward. Three times he approached the door, retreating each time in panic. At last he laid soft hands upon the latch and entered, averting his eyes. Even so, and despite the darkness inside, he was conscious of it; saw from his eye corners the big, still bulk that sat wrapped and propped in the chair by the table. He sensed it dazedly, inductively, and turned to flee, then paused.

"Ye made it, boy! It's the twelfth to-day." George's voice came weakly, and with a great cry Captain sprang to him.

"Bout all in," the other continued. "Ain't been on my feet for two days. I knowed you'd come to-day, though; it's the twelfth."

Captain made no reply, for he had knelt, his face buried in the big man's lap, his shoulders heaving, while he cried like a little boy.

The
SPANISH JADE



MAURICE HEWLETT

THE SPANISH JADE

CHAPTER I

THE PLEASANT ERRAND

INTO the plain beyond Burgos, through the sunless glare of before-dawn, upon a soft-padding ass that cast no shadow and made no sound; well upon the stern of that ass, and with two bare heels to kick him; alone in the immensity of Castile, and as happy as a king may be, rode a young man on a May morning, singing to himself a wailing, winding chant in the minor, which, as it had no end, may well have had no beginning. He only paused in it to look before him between his donkey's ears; and then—"Arré, burra, hijo de perra!"—he would drive his heels into the animal's rump. In a few minutes the song went spearing aloft again . . . "*En batalla-a-a temero-o-sa-a* . . . !"

I say that he was young; he was very young, and looked very delicate, with his transparent, alabaster skin, lustrous gray eyes, and pale, thin lips. He had a sagging straw hat upon his round and shapely head, a shirt—and a dirty shirt—open to the waist. His *faja* was a broad band of scarlet cloth wound half a dozen times about his middle, and supported a murderous long knife. For the rest, cotton drawers, bare legs, and feet as brown as walnuts. All of him that was not whitey-brown cotton or red cloth was the color of the country; but his cropped head was black, and his eyes were very light gray,

keen, restless, and bold. He was sharp-featured, careless, and impudent; but when he smiled you might think him bewitching. His name he would give you as Esteban Vincaz—which it was not; his affair was pressing, pleasant, and pious. Of that he had no doubt at all. He was intending the murder of a young woman.

His eyes, as he sang, roamed the sun-struck land, and saw everything as it should be. Life was a grim business for man and beast and herb of the field, no better for one than for the other. The winter corn in patches struggled sparsely through the clods; darnels, tares, dead-nettle, and couch, the vetches of last year, and the thistles of next, contended with it, not in vain. The olives were not yet in flower, but the plums and sloes were powdered with white; all was in order. When a clump of smoky blue iris caught his downward looks, he slipped off his ass and snatched a handful for his hat. "The Sword-flower," he called it, and accepting the omen with a chuckle, jumped into his seat again and kicked the beast with his naked heels into the shamble that does duty for a pace. As he decorated his hat-string he resumed his song:

"En batalla temerosa
Andaba el Cid castellano
Con Búcar, ese rey moro,
Que contra el Cid ha llegado
A le ganar a Valencia . . ."

He hung upon the pounding assonances, and his heart thumped in accord, as if his present adventure had been that crowning one of the hero's.

Accept him for what he was, the graceless son of his parents—horse-thief, sheep-thief, contrabandist, bully, trader of women—he had the look of a seraph when he sang, the complacency of an angel of the Weighing of Souls. And why not? He had no

doubts; he could justify every hour of his life. If money failed him, wits did not; he had the manners of a gentleman—and a gentleman he actually was, Hidalgo by birth—and the morals of a hyæna, that is to say, none at all. I doubt if he had anything worth having except the grand air; the rest had been discarded as of no account. Schooling had been his, he had let it slip; if his gentlehood had been negotiable he had carded it away. Nowadays he knew only elementary things—hunger, thirst, fatigue, desire, hatred, fear. What he craved, that he took, if he could. He feared the dark, and God in the Sacrament. He pitied nothing, regretted nothing; for to pity a thing you must respect it, and to respect you must fear; and as for regret, when it came to feeling the loss of a thing it came naturally also to hating the cause of its loss; and so the greater lust swallowed up the less. He had felt regret when Manuela ran away; it had hurt him, and he hated her for it. That was why he intended at all cost to find her again, and to kill her; because she had been his *amiga*, and had left him. Three weeks ago it had been, at the fair of Pobledo. The fair had been spoiled for him, he had earned nothing and lost much; esteem, to wit, his own esteem, mortally wounded by the loss of Manuela, whose beauty had been a mark, and its possession an asset; and time—valuable time—lost in finding out where she had gone. Friends of his had helped him; he had hailed every *arriero* on the road from Pamplona to La Coruña; and when he had what he wanted he had only delayed for one day, to get his knife ground. He knew exactly where she was, at what hour he should find her, and with whom. His tongue itched and brought water into his mouth when he pictured the meeting. He pictured it now, as he jogged and sang and looked contentedly at the endless plain.

Presently he came within sight, and, since he made no effort to avoid it, presently again into the street of a mud-built village. Few people were astir. A man slept in an angle of a wall, flies about his head; a dog in an entry scratched himself with ecstasy; a woman at a doorway was combing her child's hair, and looked up to watch his coming.

Entering in his easy way, he looked to the east to judge of the light. Sunrise was nearly an hour away; he could afford to obey the summons of the cracked bell, filling the place with its wrangling, with the creaking of its wheel. He hobbled his beast in the little *plaza*, and followed some straying women into church.

Immediately confronting him at the door was a hideous idol. A huge and brown wooden Christ, with black horsehair tresses, staring white eyeballs, staring red wounds, towered before him, hanging from a cross. Esteban knelt to it on one knee, and, remembering his hat, doffed it sideways over his ear. He said his two *paternosters*, and then performed one odd ceremony more. Several people saw him do it, but no one was surprised. He took the long knife from his *faja* running his finger lightly along the edge, laid it flat before the Cross, and, looking up at the tormented God, said Him another *pater*. That done, he went into the church, and knelt upon the floor in company with kerchiefed women, children, a dog or two, and some beggars of incredible age and infirmities beyond description, and rose to one knee, fell to both, covered his eyes, watched the celebrant, or the youngest of the women, just as the server's little bell bade him. Single ceremonies, done by rote and common to Latin Europe; certainly not learned of the Moors.

Mass over, our young avenger prepared to resume his journey by breaking his fast. A hunch of bread and a few raisins sufficed him, and he ate

these sitting on the steps of the church, watching the woman as they loitered on their way home. Esteban had a keen eye for women; pence only, I mean the lack of them, prevented him from being a collector. But the eye is free; he viewed them all from the standpoint of the cabinet. One he approved. She carried herself well, had fine ankles, and wore a flower in her hair like an Andalusian. Now, it was one of his many grudges against fate that he had never been in Andalusia and seen the women there. For certain, they were handsome; a *Sevillana*, for instance! Would they wear flowers in their hair—over the ear—unless they dared be looked at? Manuela was of Valencia, more than half *Gitana*: a wonderfully supple girl. When she danced the *jota* it was like nothing so much as a snake in agony. Her hair was tawny yellow, and very long. She wore no flower in it, but bound a red handkerchief in and out of the plaits. She was vain of her hair—heart of God, how he hated her!

Then the priest came out of church, fat dew-lapped, greasy, very short of breath, but benevolent. "Good day, good day to you," he said. "You are a stranger. From the North?"

"My reverence, from Burgos."

"Ha, from Burgos this morning! A fine city, a great city."

"Yes, sir, it's true. It is where they buried our lord the Campeador."

"So they say. You are lettered! And early afoot."

"Yes, sir. I am called to be early. I still go South."

"Seeking work, no doubt. You are honest, I hope?"

"Yes, sir, a very honest Christian. But I seek no work. I find it."

"You are lucky," said the priest, and took snuff.

"And where is your work? In Valladolid, perhaps?"

Esteban blinked hard at that last question. "No, sir," he said. "Not there." Do what he might he could not repress the bitter gleam in his eyes.

The old priest paused, his fingers once more in the snuff-box. "There again you have a great city. Ah, and there was a time when Valladolid was one of the greatest in Castile. The capital of a kingdom! Chosen seat of a king! Pattern of the true Faith!" His eyelids narrowed quickly. "You do not know it?"

"No, sir," said Esteban gently. "I have never been there."

The priest shrugged. "*Vaya!* it is no affair of mine," he said. Then he waved his hand, wagging it about like a fan. "Go your ways," he added, "with God."

"Always at the feet of your reverence," said Esteban, and watched him depart. He started after him, and looked sick.

Altogether he delayed for an hour and a quarter in this village: a material time. The sun was up as he left it—a burning globe, just above the limits of the plain.

CHAPTER II

THE TRAVELER AT LARGE

AHEAD of Esteban, some five or six hours, or rather, converging upon a common centre so far removed from our friend, was one Osmund Manvers, a young English gentleman of easy fortune, independent habits, and analytical disposition; also riding, also singing to himself, equally early

afoot, but in very different circumstances. He bestrode a horse tolerably sound, had a haversack before him reasonably stored. He had a clean shirt on him, and another embaled, a brace of pistols, a New Testament and a "Don Quixote"; he wore brown knee-boots, a tweed jacket, white duck breeches, and a straw hat as little picturesque as it was comfortable or convenient. Neither revenge nor enemy lay ahead of him; he traveled for his pleasure, and so pleasantly that even Time was his friend. Health was the salt of his daily fare, and curiosity gave him appetite for every minute of the day.

He would have looked incongruous in the elfin landscape—in that empty plain, under that ringing sky—if he had not appeared to be as extremely at home in it as young Esteban himself; but there was this further difference to be noted, that whereas Esteban seemed to belong to the land, the land seemed to belong to Mr. Manvers—the land of the Spains and all those vast distances of it, the enormous space of ground, the dim blue mountains at the edge, the great arch of sky over all. He might have been a young squire at home, overlooking his farms, one eye for the tillage or the upkeep of fence and hedge, another for a covey or a hare in a furrow. He was as serene as Esteban and as contented; but his comfort lay in easy possession, not in being easily possessed. Occasionally he whistled as he rode, but, like Esteban, broke now and again into a singing voice, more cheerful, I think, than melodious.

"If she be not fair for me,
What care I how fair she be?"

An old song. But Henry Chorley made a tune for it the summer before Mr. Manvers left England, and it had caught his fancy, both the air and

the sentiment. They had come aptly to suit his scoffing mood, and to help him salve the wound which a Miss Eleanor Vernon had dealt his heart—a Miss Eleanor Vernon with her clear, disdainful eyes. She had given him his first acquaintance with the hot-and-cold disease. “If she be not fair for me!” Well, she was not to be that. Let her go spin then, and—“What care I how fair she be?” He had discarded her with the Dover cliffs and resumed possession of himself and his seeing eye. By this time a course of desultory journeying through Brittany and the West of France, a winter in Paris, a packet from Bordeaux to Santander had cured him of his hurt. The song came unsought to his lips, but had no wounded heart to salve.

Mr. Manvers was a pleasant-looking young man, sanguine in hue, gray in the eye, with a twisted sort of smile by no means unattractive. His features were irregular, but he looked wholesome; his humor was fitful, sometimes easy, sometime unaccountably stiff. They called him a Character at home, meaning that he was liable to freakish asides from the common rutted road, and could not be counted on. It was true. He for his part called himself an observer of Manners, which implied that he had rather watch than take a side; but he was both hot-tempered and quick-tempered, and might well find himself in the middle of things before he knew it. His crooked smile, however, seldom deserted him, seldom was exchanged for a crooked scowl; and the light beard which he had allowed himself in the solitudes of Paris led one to imagine his jaw less square than it really was.

I suppose him to have been five-foot-ten in his boots, and strong to match. He had a comfortable income, derived from land in Somersetshire, upon which his mother, a widow lady, and his two unmarried sisters lived, and attended archery meetings

in company of the curate. The disdain of Miss Eleanor Vernon had cured him of a taste for such simple joys, and now that, by travel, he had cured himself of Miss Eleanor, he was traveling on for his pleasure, or, as he told himself, to avoid the curate. Thus neatly he referred to his obligations to Church and State in Somersetshire.

By six o'clock on this fine May morning he had already ridden far—from Sahagun, indeed, where he had spent some idle days lounging and exchanging observations on the weather with the inhabitants. He had been popular, for he was perfectly simple, and without airs; never asked what he did not want to know, and never refused to answer what it was obviously desired he should. But man cannot live upon small talk; and as he had taken up his rest in Sahagun in a moment of impulse—when he saw that it possessed a church dome covered with glazed green tiles—so now he left it.

“High heaven!” he had cried, sitting up in bed, “what the deuce am I doing here? Nothing. Nothing on earth. Let’s get out of it.” So out he had got, and could not ask for breakfast—at four in the morning.

He rode fast, desiring to make way before the heat began, and by six o'clock, with the sun above the horizon, was not sorry to see towers and pinacles, or to hear across the emptiness the clangorous notes of a deep-toned bell. “The muezzin calls the faithful, but for me another summons must be sounded. That town will be Palencia. There I breakfast, by the grace of God. Coffee and eggs.”

Palencia it was, a town of pretence, if such a word can be applied to anything Spanish, where things either are or are not, and there’s an end. It was as drab as the landscape, as weather-worn and austere; but it had a squat officer sitting at the receipt of custom, which Sahagun had not, and a file of

anxious peasants before him, bargaining for their chickens and hay.

Upon the horseman's approach the functionary raised himself, looking over the heads of the crowd as at a greater thing, saluted, and inquired for gate dues with his patient eyes. "I have here," said Manvers, who loved to be didactic in a foreign language, "a shirt and a comb, the New Testament, the 'History of the Ingenious Gentleman, Don Quixote de la Mancha,' and a tooth-brush."

Much of this was Greek to the *doganero*, who however understood that the stranger was referring in tolerable Castilian to a provincial gentleman of degree. The name and Manvers's twisted smile together won him the entry. The officer just eased his peaked cap. "Go with God, sir," he directed.

"Assuredly," said Manvers, "but pray assist me to the inn."

The Providencia was named, indicated, and found. There was an elderly man in the yard of it, placidly plucking a live fowl, a barbarity with which our traveler had now ceased to quarrel.

"Leave your horrid task, my friend," he said; "take my horse and feed him."

The bird was released, and after shaking, by force of habit, what no longer, or only partially, existed, rejoined his companions. They received him coldly, but he soon showed that he could pick as well as be picked.

"Now," said Manvers to the ostler, "give this horse half a feed of corn, then some water, then the other half; but give him nothing until you have cooled him down. Do these things, and I present you one *peseta*. Omit any of them, and I give you nothing at all. Is that a bargain?"

The old man haled off the horse, muttering that it would be a bad bargain for his Grace, to which

Manvers replied that we should see. Then he went into the Providencia for his coffee and eggs.

CHAPTER III

DIVERSIONS OF TRAVEL

IF SAHAGUN puts you out of conceit with Castile, you are not likely to be put in again by Palencia; for a second rate town in Castile is like a piece of the plain enclosed by a wall, and only emphasises the desolation at the expense of the freedom; and as in a windy square all the city garbage is blown into corners, so the walled town seems to collect and set to festering the disreputable creatures of the waste.

Mr. Manvers, his meal over, hankered after broad spaces again. He walked the arcaded streets and cursed the flies, he entered the Cathedral and was driven out by the beggars. He leaned over the bridge and watched the green river, and that set him longing for a swim. If his maps told him the truth, some few leagues on the road to Valladolid should discover him a fine wood, the wood of La Huerca, beyond which, skirting it, in fact, should be the Pisuerga. Here he could bathe, loiter away the noon, and take his *merienda*, which should be the best Palencia could supply.

*"Muera Marta,
Y muera harta"*

"Let Martha die, but not on an empty stomach," he said to himself. He knew his Don Quixote better than most Spaniards.

He furnished his haversack, then, with bread, ham, sausages, wine, and oranges, ordered out his horse, satisfied himself that the ostler had earned

his fee, and departed at an ambling pace to seek his amusements. But, though he knew it not, the finger of fate was upon him, and he was enjoying the last of that perfect leisure without which travel, love-making, the arts and sciences, or the rearing of a family are but weariness and disgust. Just outside the gate of Palencia he had an adventure which occupied him until the end of this tale, and, indeed, some way beyond it.

The Puerta de Valladolid is really no gate at all, but a gateway. What walls it may once have pierced have fallen away from it in their fight with time, and now but tresses and rubbish-heaps, a moat of blurred outline and much filth alone testify to former pretensions. Beyond was to be found a sandy waste, miscalled an *alameda*, a littered place of brown grass, dust, and loose stones, fringed with parched acacias and diversified by hillocks, upon which, in former days of strife, standards may have been placed, mangonels planted, perhaps Napoleonic cannon.

It was upon one of these mounds, which was shaded by a tree, that Manvers observed, and paused in the gateway to observe, the doings of a group of persons, some seven boys and lads, and a girl. A kind of uncouth courtship seemed to be in progress, or (as he put it) the holding of a rude court. He thought to see a Circe of picaresque Spain with her swinish rout about her. To drop metaphor, the young woman sat upon the hillock, with half a dozen tatterdemalions round her in various stages of amorous enchantment.

He set the girl down for a gypsy, for he knew enough of the country to be sure that no marriageable maiden of worth could be courted in this fashion. Or if not a gypsy then a thing of naught, to be pitied if the truth were known, at any rate to be skirted. Her hair, which seemed to be of a dusty

gold tinge, was knotted up in a red handkerchief; her gown was of blue faded to green, her feet were bare. If a gypsy, she was to be trusted to take care of herself; if but a sunburnt vagrant she could be let to shift; and yet he watched her curiously, while she sat as impassive as a young Sphinx, and wondered to himself why he did it.

Suppose her of that sort you may see any day at a fair, jigging outside a booth in red bodice and spangles, a waif, a little who-knows-who, suppose her pretty to death—what is she even then but an iridescent bubble, as one might say, thrown up by some standing pool of vice, as filmy, very nearly as fleeting, and quite as poisonous? It struck him as he watched—not the girl in particular, but a whole genus centred in her—as really extraordinary, as an obliquity of Providence, that such ephemerids must abound, predestined to misery; must come and sin, and wail and go, with souls inside them to be saved, which nobody could save, and bodies fair enough to love, which nobody could stoop to love. Had the scheme of our Redemption scope enough for this—for this trifle, along with Santa Teresa, and the Queen of Sheba, and Isabella the Catholic? He perceived himself slipping into the sententious on slight pretence—but presently found himself engaged.

Hatless, shoeless, and coatless were the oafs who surrounded the object of his speculations, some lying flat with elbows forward and chin to fist, some creeping and scrambling about her to get her notice or fire her into a rage, some squatting at an easy distance with ribaldries to exchange. But there was one, sitting a little above her on the mound, who seemed to consider himself in a sort her proprietor. He was master of the pack, warily on the watch, able by position and strength to prevent what he might at any moment choose to think an infringe-

ment of his rights. A sullen, grudging, silent, and jealous dog, Manvers saw him, and asked himself how long she would stand it. At present she seemed unaware of her surroundings.

He saw that she sat broodingly, as if ruminating on more serious things, such as famine or thirst, her elbows on her knees and her face in her two hands. That was the true gypsy attitude, he knew, all the world over. So intent she was, that she was careless of her person, careless that her bodice was open at the neck, and that more people than Manvers were aware of it. A flower was in her mouth, or he thought so, judging from the blot of scarlet thereabouts; her face was set fixedly toward the town—too fixedly that he might care—since she cared so little—whether she saw him there or not. And after all, not she, but the manners of the game centred about her, was what mattered.

Manners, indeed! The fastidious in our young man was all on edge; he became a critic of Spain. Where in England, France, or Italy could you have witnessed such a scene as this? Or what people but the Spaniards among the children of Noah know themselves so certainly lords of the earth that they can treat women, mules, prisoners, Jews, and bulls according to the caprices of appetite? That an Italian should make public display of his property in a woman, or his scorn of her, was a thing unthinkable; yet, if you came to consider it, so it was that a Spaniard should not. Set aside, said he to himself, the grand air, and what has the Spaniard which the brutes have not?

Hotly questioning the attendant heavens, Manvers saw just such an act of mastery, when the lumpish fellow above the girl put his hand upon her, and kept it there, and the others thereupon drew back and ceased their tricks, as if admitting possession and seisin taken, as the lawyers called it.

To Manvers a hateful thing. He felt his blood surge in his neck. "Damn him! I've a mind——! And they pray to a woman!"

But the girl did nothing—neither moved, nor seemed to be aware. Then the drama suddenly quickened, the actors serried, and the acts, down to the climax, followed fast.

Emboldened by her passivity, the oaf advanced by inches, visibly. He looked knowingly about him, collecting approval from his followers, he whispered in her ear, hummed gallant airs, regaled the company with snatches of salt song. Fixed as the Sphinx and unfathomable, she sat on broodingly until, piqued by her indifference, maybe, or swayed by some wave of desire, he caught her round the waist and buried his face in her neck—and then, all at once, she awoke, shivered, and collected herself, without warning shook herself free, and hit her bully a blow on the nose with all her force.

He reeled back, with his hands to his face; the blood gushed over his fingers. Then all were on their feet and a scuffle began, the most unequal you can conceive, and the most impossible. It was all against one, with stones flying and imprecations after them, and in the midst the tawny-haired girl fighting like one possessed.

A minute of this—hardly so much—was more than enough for Manvers, who, when he could believe his eyes, pricked headlong into the fray, and began to lay about him with his crop. "Dogs, sons of dogs, down with your hands!" he cried, in Spanish which was fluent, if imaginative. But his science with the whip was beyond dispute, and the diversion, coming suddenly from behind, scattered the enemy into headlong flight.

The field cleared, the girl was to be seen. She lay moaning on the ground, her arms extended, her right leg twitching. She was bleeding at the ear.

CHAPTER IV

TWO ON HORSEBACK

NOW Manvers was under fire, for the enemy, reinforced by stragglers from the town, had unmasked a battery of stones, and was making fine practice from the ruins of the wall. He was hit more than once, his horse more than he; both were exasperated, and he in particular was furious at the presence of spectators who, comfortably in the shade, watched, and had been watching, the whole affair with enviable detachment of mind and body. With so much to chafe him, he may be pardoned for some irritability.

He dismounted as coolly as he could, and led his horse about to cover her from the stones. "Come," he said, as he stooped to touch her, "I must move you out of this. Saint Stephen—blessed young man—has forestalled this means of going to heaven. Oh, damn the stones!"

He used no ceremony, but picked her up as if she had been a dressmaker's dummy, and set her on her feet, where, after swaying about, and some balancing with her hands, she presently steadied herself, and stood, dazed and empty-eyed. Her cheek was cut, her ear was bleeding; her hair was down, the red handkerchief uncoiled; her dusky skin was stained with dirt and scratches, and her bosom heaved riotously as she caught for her breath.

"Take your time, my dear," said Manvers kindly. And she did, by tumbling into his arms. Here then was a situation for the student of Manners; a brisk discharge of stones from an advancing line of skirmishers, a strictly impartial crowd of sightseers, a

fidgety horse, and himself embarrassed by a girl in a faint.

He called for help and, getting none, shook his fist at the callous devils who ignored him; he inspected his charge, who looked as pure as a child in her swoon, all her troubles forgotten and sins blotted out; he inquired of the skies, as if hopeful that the ravens, as of old, might bring him help; at last, seeing nothing else for it, he picked up the girl in both arms and pitched her on to the saddle. There, with some adjusting, he managed to prop her while he led the horse slowly away. He had to get the reins in his teeth before he had gone ten yards. The retreat began.

It was within two hours of noon, or nothing had saved him from a retirement as harassing as Sir John Moore's. It was the sun, not ravens, that came to his help. Meantime the girl had recovered herself somewhat and, when they were out of sight of the town and its inhabitants, showed him that she had by sliding from the saddle and standing firmly on her feet.

"Hulloa!" said Manvers. "What's the matter now? Do you think you can walk back? You can't you know." He addressed her in his best Castilian. "I am afraid you are hurt. Let me help——" but she held him off with a stiffening arm, while she wiped her face with her petticoat, and put herself into some sort of order. She did it deftly and methodically, with the practised hands of a woman used to the public eye. She might have been an actress at the wings, about to go on. Nor would she look at him or let him see that she was aware of her presence until all was in order—her hair twisted into the red handkerchief, the neck of her dress pinned together, her torn skirt nicely hung. Her coquetry, her skill in adjusting what seemed past praying for, her pains with herself,

were charming to see and very touching. Manvers watched her closely, and could not deny her beauty.

She was a vivid beauty, fiercely colored, with her tawny gold hair, sunburnt skin, and jade-green, far-seeing eyes, her coiled crimson handkerchief and blue-green gown. She was finely made, slim, and in contour hardly more than a child; and yet she seemed to him very mature, a practised hand, with very various knowledge deep in her eyes, and a wide acquaintance behind her quiet lips. With her re-ordered toilet she had taken on self-possession and dignity, a reserve which baffled him. Without any more reason than this he felt for her a kind of respect which nothing, certainly, in what he had seen of her circumstances could justify. Yet he gave her her title—which marks his feeling.

"Señorita," he said, "I wish to be of service to you. Command me. Shall I take you back to Palencia?"

She answered him seriously. "I beg that you will not, sir."

"If you have friends——" he began, and she said at once, "I have none."

"Or parents?"

"None."

"Relatives?"

"None, none."

"Then your——"

"I know what you would say. I have no house."

"Then," said Manvers, looking vaguely over the plain, "what do you wish me to do for you?"

She was now sitting by the roadside, very collectedly, looking down at her hands in her lap. "You will leave me here, if you must," she said; "but I would ask your charity to take me a little farther from Palencia. Nobody has ever been kind to me before." She said this quite simply, as if stating a fact. He was moved.

"You were unhappy in Palencia?"

"Yes," she said. "I would rather be left here." The enormous plain of Castile, treeless, sun-struck, empty of living thing, made her words eloquent.

"Absurd," said Manvers. "If I leave you here you will die."

"In Palencia," said the girl, "I cannot die." And then her grave eyes pierced him, and he knew what she meant.

"Great God!" said Manvers. "Then I shall take you to a convent."

She nodded her head. "Where you will, sir," she replied. Her gravity, far beyond her seeming station, gave value to her confidence.

"That seems to me the best thing I can do with you," Manvers said; "and if you don't shirk it there is no reason why I should. Now, can you stick on the saddle if I put you up?"

She nodded again. "Up you go then." He would have swung her up sideways, lady-fashion; but she laughed and cried, "No, no," put a hand on his shoulder, her left foot in the stirrup, and swung herself into the saddle as neatly as a groom. There she sat astride, like a circus-rider, and stuck her arm akimbo as she looked down for his approval.

"Bravo," said Manvers. "You have been a-horseback before this, my girl. Now you must make room for me." He got up behind her and took the reins from under her arm. With the other arm it was necessary to embrace her; she allowed it sedately. Then they ambled off together, making a Darby-and-Joan affair of it.

But the sun was now close upon noon, burning upon them out of a sky of brass. There was no wind, and the flies were maddening. After a while he noticed that the girl simply stooped her head to the heat, as if she were wilting like a picked flower. When he felt her heavy on his arm he saw that he

must stop. So he did, and plied her with wine from his pocket-flask, feeding her drop by drop as she lay back against him. He got bread out of his haversack and made her eat: she soon revived, and then he learned the fact that she had eaten nothing since yesterday's noon. "How should I eat," she asked, "when I have earned nothing?"

"Nohow, but by charity," he agreed. "Had Palencia no compassion?" She grew dark and would not answer him at first; presently asked, had he not seen Palencia?

"I agree," he said. "But let me ask you, without indiscretion if I may, how did you propose to earn your bread in Palencia?"

"I would have worked in the fields for a day, sir," she told him, "but no longer, for I have to get on."

"Where do you wish to go?"

"Away from here."

"To Valladolid?"

She looked up into his face—her head was still near his shoulder. "To Valladolid? Never there."

This made him laugh. "To Palencia? Never there. To Valladolid? Never there. Where then, lady of the sea-green eyes?"

She veiled her eyes quickly. "To Madrid, I suppose. I wish to work."

"Can you find work there?"

"Surely. It is a great city."

"Do you know it?"

"Yes, I was there long ago."

"What did you do there?"

"I worked. I was very well there." She sat up and looked back over his shoulder. She had done that once or twice before, and now he asked her what she was looking for. She desisted at once: "Nothing," was her answer.

He made her drink from the flask again and gave

her his pocket handkerchief to cover her head. When she understood she laughed at him without disguise. Did he think she feared the sun? She bade him look at her neck—which was walnut-brown, and sleek as satin; but when he would have taken back his handkerchief she refused it, and put it over her head like a hood, and tied it under her chin. She then turned herself round to face him.

"Is it so you would have it, sir?" she asked and looked bewitching.

"My dear," said Manvers, "you are a beauty." Shall he be blamed if he kissed her? Not by me, since she never blamed him.

Her clear-seeing eyes searched his face; her kissed mouth looked very serious, and also very pure. Then, as he observed her ardently, she colored and looked down, and afterward turned herself the way they were to go, and with a little sigh settled into his arms.

Manvers spurred his horse, and for some time nothing was said between them. But he was of a talkative habit, with a trick of conversing with himself for lack of a better man. He asked her if he was forgiven, and felt her answer on his arm, though she gave him none in words. This was not to content him. "I see that you will not," he said, to tease her. "Well, I call that hard after my stoning. I had believed the ladies of Spain kinder to their cavaliers than to grudge a kiss for a cart-load of stones at the head. Well, well, I'm properly paid. Laws go as kings will, I know. God help poor men!" He would have gone on with his baiting had she not surprised him.

She turned him a burning face. "Caballero, caballero, have done!" she begged him. "You rescued me from worse than death—and what could I deny you? See, sir, I have lived fifteen, seventeen years in the world, and nobody—nobody, I say—has ever

done me a kindness before. And you think that I grudge you!" She was really unhappy, and had to be comforted.

They became close friends after that. She told him her name was Manuela, and that she was a Valencian by birth. A *Gitana*? No, indeed. She was a Christian. "You are a very bewitching Christian, Manuela," he told her, and drew her face back, and kissed her again. I am told that there's nothing in kissing, once: it's the second that counts. In the very act—for eyes met as well as lips—he noticed that hers wavered on the way to his, beyond him, over the road they had traveled; and the ceremony over, he again asked her why. She passed it off as before—saying that she had looked at nothing, and begged him to go forward.

Ahead of them now, through the crystalline flicker of the heat, he saw the dark rim of the wood, the cork forest of La Huerca for which he was looking, which hid the river from his aching eyes. No foot-burnt wanderer in Sahara ever hailed his oasis with heartier thanksgiving; but it was still a league and a half away. He addressed himself to the task of reaching it, and we may suppose Manuela respected his efforts. At any rate, there was silence between the pair for the better part of an hour—what time the unwinking sun, vertically overhead, deprived them of so much as the sight of their own shadows, and drove the very crows with wings adust to skulk in the furrows. The shrilling of crickets, the stumbling hoofs of an overtaxed horse, and the creaking of saddle and girth made a din in the deadly stillness of this fervent noon, and, since there was no other sound to be heard, it is hard to tell how Manvers was aware of a traveler behind him, unless he was served by the sixth sense we all have, to warn us that we are not alone.

Sure enough, when he looked over his shoulder

He was aware of a donkey and his rider drawing smoothly and silently near. The pair of them were so nearly of the color of the ground, he had to look long to be sure; and, as he looked, Manuela suddenly leaned sideways and saw what he saw. It was just as if she had received a stroke of the sun. She stiffened; he felt the thrill go through her; and when she resumed her first position she was another person.

CHAPTER V

THE AMBIGUOUS THIRD

GOD save your grace," said Esteban; for it was he who, sitting well back upon his donkey's rump, with exceedingly bright eyes and a cheerful grin, now forged level with Manvers and his burdened steed.

Manvers gave him a curt good day, and thought him an impudent fellow—which was not justified by anything Esteban had done. He had been discretion itself; and, indeed, to his eyes there had been nothing of necessity remarkable in the pair on the horse. If a lady—duchess or baggage—happened to be sharing the gentleman's saddle, an arrangement must be presumed, which could not possibly concern himself. That is the reasonable standpoint of a people who mind their own business and credit their neighbors with the same preoccupation.

But Manvers was an Englishman and could not for the life of him consider Esteban as anything but a puppy for seeing him in a compromising situation. So much was he annoyed that he did not remark any longer that Manuela was another person, sitting stiffly, strained against his arm, every muscle on the

stretch, as taut as a ship's cable in the tideway, her face in rigid profile to the newcomer.

Esteban was in no way put out. "Many good days light upon your grace!" he cheerfully repeated—so cheerfully that Manvers was appeased.

"Good day, good day to you," he said. "You ride light and I ride heavy, otherwise you had not overtaken us."

Esteban showed his fine teeth, and waved his hand toward the hazy distance; from the tail of his eye he watched Manuela in profile. "Who knows that, sir? *Lo que ha de ser*—as we say. Ah, who knows that?" Manuela strained her face forward.

"Well," said Manvers, "I do, for example. I have proved my horse. He's a Galician, and a good goer. It would want a brave *borico* to outpace him."

Esteban slipped into the axiomatic, as all Spaniards will. "There's a providence of the road, sir, and a saint in charge of travelers. And we know, sir, *a cada puerco viene su San Martín*." Manuela stooped her body forward, and peered ahead, as one strains to see in the dark.

"Your proverb is oddly chosen, it seems to me," said Manvers. Esteban gave a little chuckle from his throat.

"A proverb is a stone flung into a pack of starlings. It may scare the most, but may hit one. By mine I referred to the ways of providence, under a figure. Destiny is always at work."

"No doubt," said Manvers, slightly bored.

"It might have been your destiny to have outpaced me: the odds were with you. On the other hand, as you have not, it must have been mine to have overtaken you."

"You are a philosopher?" asked Manvers, fatigue deliberately in his voice. Esteban's eyes shone intensely: he had marked the changed inflection.

"I studied the Humanities at Salamanca," he said carelessly. "That was when I was an innocent. Since then I have learned in a harder school. I am learning still—every day I learn something new. I am a gentleman born, as your grace has perceived, why not a philosopher?"

Manvers was rather ashamed of himself. "Of course, of course! Why not indeed? I am very glad to see you, while our ways coincide."

Esteban raised his battered straw. "I kiss the feet of your grace, and hope your grace's lady," Manuela quivered, "is not disturbed by my company; for to tell you the truth, sir, I propose to enjoy your own as long as you and she are agreeable. I am used to companionship." He shot a keen glance at Manuela, who never moved.

"She will speak for herself, no doubt," said Manvers; but she did not. The gleam in Esteban's light eyes gave point to his next speech.

"I have a notion that the señora is not of your mind, sir," he said, "and am sorry. I can hardly remain as an unwelcome third in a journey. It would be a satisfaction to me if the señora would assure me that I am wrong." Manuela now turned her head with an effort and looked down upon the grinning youth.

"Why should I care whether you stay or go?" she said. Her eyelids flickered over her eyes as though he were dust in their light. He showed his teeth.

"Why indeed, señora? God knows I have no reputation to bring you, though the company of a gentleman, the son of a gentleman, never comes amiss, they say. But two is company, and three is a fair. I have found it so, and so doubtless has your ladyship."

She made him no answer, and had turned away her face long before he had finished. After that the conversation was mainly of his making; for

Manuela would saw nothing, and Manvers had nothing to say. The cork wood was plain in front of him now; he thanked God for the prospect of food and rest. In fifteen minutes, thought he, he should be swimming in the Pisuerga.

The forest began tentatively, with heath, sparse trees, and mounds of cistus and bramble. Manvers followed the road, which ran through a portion of it, until he saw the welcome thickets on either hand, deep tunnels of dark, and shadowy places where the sun could not stab; then he turned aside over the broken ground, and Esteban's donkey picked a dainty way behind him. When he had reached what seemed to him perfection, he pulled up.

"Now, young lady," he said. "I will give you food and drink, and then you shall go to sleep, and so will I. Afterward we will consider what had best be done with you."

"Yes, sir," she replied in a whisper. Manvers dismounted and held out his hand to her. There was no more coquetting with the saddle. She scarcely touched his hand, and did not once lift her eyes to him—but he was busy with his haversack and had no thoughts for her.

Esteban meantime sat the donkey, looking gravely at his company, blinking his eyes, smiling quietly, recurring now and then to the winding minor air which had been in his head all day. He was perfectly unhampered by any doubts of his welcome, and watched with serious attention the preparations for a meal in the open which Manvers was making with the ease and dispatch of one versed in camps.

Ham and sausage, rolls of bread, a lettuce, oranges, cheese, dates, a bottle of wine, another of water, salt, olives, a knife and fork, a plate, a cork-screw; every article was in its own paper, some were marked in pencil, what they were. All were spread out upon a horse-blanket; in good enough order for

a field-inspection. Nothing was wanting, and Esteban was as keen as a wolf. Even Manvers rubbed his hands. He looked shrewdly at his neighbor.

"Good *alforjas*, eh?"

"Excellent indeed, sir," said Esteban hoarsely. It was hard to see this food, and know that he could not eat it. Manuela was sitting under a tree, her face in her hands.

"How far away," said Manvers, "is the water, do you suppose?"

"The water?" Esteban collected himself with a start. "The water?" He jerked his head toward the display on the blanket. "It is under your hand, caballero. That bottle I take it, holds water."

Manvers laughed. "Yes, yes. I mean the river. I am going to swim in the river. Don't wait for me." He turned to the girl. "Take some food, my friend. I'll be back before long."

Her swift transitions bewildered him. She showed him now a face of extreme terror. She was on her feet in a moment, rigid, and her eyes were so pale that her face looked empty of eyes, like a mask. What on earth was the matter with her? He understood her to be saying, "I must go where you go. I must never leave you," words like that; but they came from her mouth rather than voiced, as the babbling of a mad woman. All that was clear was that she was beside herself with fright. Looking at Esteban for an explanation, he surprised a triumphant gleam in that youth's light eyes, and saw him grinning—as a dog grins, with the lip curled back.

But Esteban spoke. "I think the lady is right, sir. Affection is a beautiful thing." He added politely, "The loss will be mine."

Manvers looked from one to the other of these curious persons so clearly conscious of each other, yet so strict to avoid recognition. His eyes rested

on Manuela. "What's the matter, my child?" She met his glance furtively, as if afraid that he was angry; plainly she was ashamed of her panic. Her eyes were now collected, her brow cleared and the tension of her arms relaxed.

"Nothing is the matter," she said in a low voice. "I will stay here." She was shaking still; she held herself with both her hands, and shook the more.

"I think that you are knocked over by the heat and all the rest of your troubles," said Manvers, "and I don't wonder. Repose yourself here—eat—drink. Don't spare the victuals, I beg. And so for you, my brother, I invite you, too, to eat what you please. And I place this young lady in your charge. Don't forget that. She's had a fright, and good reason for it; she's been hurt. I leave her in your care, with every confidence that you will protect her."

Every word spoken was absorbed by Esteban with immense relish. The words pleased him, to begin with, by their Spanish ring. Manvers had been pleased himself. It was the longest speech he had yet made in Castilian; but he had no notion, of course, how exquisitely apposite to the situation they were.

Esteban became superb. He rose to the height of the argument, and to that of his inches, took off his old hat and held it out the length of his arm. "Let the lady fear nothing, señor caballero of my soul. I engage the honor of a gentleman that she shall have every consideration at my hands which her virtues merit. No more"—he looked at the sullen beauty between him and the Englishman—"No more, for that would be idolatrous; and no less, for that would be injustice *Vaya, caballero, vaya Vd. con Dios.*"

Manvers nodded and strolled away.

CHAPTER VI

A SPANISH CHAPTER

HIS removal snapped a chain. These two persons became themselves.

Manuela with eyes ablaze strode over to Esteban. "Well," she said. "You have found me. What is your pleasure?"

He sat very still on his donkey, watching her. He rolled himself a cigarette, still watching, and as he lighted it, looked at her over the flame.

"Speak, Esteban," she said quivering; but he took two luxurious inhalations first, discharged in dense columns through his nose. Then said, breathing smoke, "I have come to kill you, Manuelita—from Pobledo in a day and a half."

She had folded her arms, and now nodded. "I know it. I have expected you."

"Of course," said Esteban, inhaling enormously. He shot the smoke upward toward the light, where it floated and spread out in radiant bars of blue. Manuela was tapping her foot.

"Well, I am here," she said. "I might have left you, but I have not. Why don't you do what you intended?"

"There is plenty of time," said Esteban, and continued to smoke. He began to make another cigarette.

"Do you know why I chose to stay with you?" she asked him softly. "Do you know, Esteban?"

He raised his eyebrows. "Not at all."

"It was because I had a bargain to make with you."

He looked at her inquiringly; but he shrugged:

"It will be a hard bargain for you, my girl," he told her.

"I believe you will agree to it," she said quickly, "seeing that of my own will I have remained here. I will let you kill me as your please—on a condition."

"Name your condition," said Esteban. "I will only say now that it is my wish to strangle you with my hands."

She put both hers to her throat. "Good," she said. "That shall be your affair. But let the caballero go free. He has done you no harm."

"On the contrary," said Esteban. "I shall certainly kill him when he returns. Have no doubt of that—and then I shall have his horse."

Immediately, without fear, she went up to him where he sat his donkey. She saw the knife in his *faja*, but had no fear at all. She came quite close to him, with an ardent face, with eyes alight. She stretched out her arms like a man on a cross.

"Kill, kill, Esteban! But listen first. You shall spare that gentleman's life, for he has done you no wrong!"

He laughed her down. "Wrong! And you come to me to swear that on the Cross of Christ? Daughter of swine, you lie."

Tears were in her eyes, which made her blink and shake her head—but she came closer yet in a passion of entreaty. She was so close that her bosom touched him. "Kill, Esteban, kill—but love me first!" Her arms were about him now, as if she must have love of him or die. "Esteban, Esteban!" she was whispering as if she hungered and thirsted for him. He shivered at a memory. "Love me once, love me once, Esteban!" Close and closer she clung to him; her eyes implored a kiss.

"Loose me, you jade," he said, less sharply, but she clove the closer to him, the one hand crept down-

ward from his shoulder, as if she would embrace him by the middle. "Too late, Manuelita, too late," he said again, but he was plainly softening. She drew his face toward hers as if to kiss him, then whipped the long knife out of his girdle and drove it with all her sobbing force into his neck. Esteban uttered a thick groan, threw his head up and rocked twice. Then his head dropped, and he fell sideways off his donkey.

She stood staring at what she had done.

CHAPTER VII

THE SLEEPER AWAKENED

MANVERS returned whistling from his bath, at peace with all the world of Spain, in a large mood of benevolence and charitable judgment. His mind dwelt pleasantly on Manuela, but pity mixed with his thought; and he added some prudence on his own account. "That child—she's no more—I must do something for her. Not a bad 'un, I'll swear, not fundamentally bad. I don't doubt her as I doubt the male: too glib by half. She's distractingly pretty—what nectarine color! The mouth of a child—that droop at the corners—and as soft as a child's too." He shook his head. "No more kissing, or I shall be in a mess."

When he reached his tree and his luncheon, to find his companions gone, he was a little taken aback. His genial proposals were suddenly chilled. "Queer couple—I had a notion that they knew something of each other. So they've made a match of it."

Then he saw a brass crucifix lying in the middle of his plate. "Hulloa!" he stooped to pick it up. It was still warm. He smiled and felt a glow come

back. "Now that's charming of her. That's a pretty touch—from a pretty girl. She's no baggage, depend upon it." The string had plainly hung the thing round her neck, the warmth was that of her bosom. He held it tenderly while he turned it about. I'll warrant now that was all she had upon her. Not a maravedí besides. I know it's the last thing to leave 'em. I'm repaid, more than repaid. I'll wear you for a bit, my friend, if you won't scorch a heretic." Here he slipped the string over his head, and dropped the cross within his collar. "I'll treat you to a chain in Valladolid," was his final thought before he consigned Manuela to his cabinet of memories.

He poured and drank, hacked at his ham-bone and ate. "By the Lord," he went on commenting, "they've not had bite or sup. Too busy with their match-making? Too delicate to feast without invitation? Which?" He pondered the puzzle. He had invited Manuela, he was sure; had he included her swain? If not, the thing was clear. She wouldn't eat without him, and he couldn't eat without his host. It was the best thing he knew of Esteban.

He finished his meal, filled and lit a pipe, smoked half of it drowsily, then lay and slept. Nothing disturbed his three hours' rest, not even the gathering cloud of flies, whose droning over a neighboring thicket must have kept awake a lighter sleeper. But Manvers was so fast that he did not hear footsteps in the road, nor the sound of picking in the peaty ground.

It was four o'clock and more when he awoke, sat up, and looked at his watch. Yawning and stretching at ease, he then became aware of a friar, with a brown shaven head and fine black beard, who was digging near by. This man, whose eyes had been upon him, waiting for recognition, immediately

stopped his toil, struck his spade into the ground, and came toward him, bowing as he came.

"Good evening, señor caballero," he said. "I am Fray Juan de la Cruz, at your service; from the convent of N. S. de la Peña near by. I have to be my own grave-digger; but will you be so obliging as to commit the body while I read the office?"

To this abrupt invitation Manvers could only reply by staring. Fray Juan apologized.

"I imagined that you had perceived my business," he said, "which truly is none of yours. It will be an act of charity on your part—therefore its own reward."

"May I ask you," said Manvers, now on his feet, "what, or whom, you are burying?"

"Come," the friar replied. "I will show you the body." Manvers followed him into the thicket.

"Good God, what's this?" The staring light eyes of Esteban Vincaz had no reply for him. He had to turn away, sick at the sight.

Fray Juan de la Cruz told him what he knew. A young girl, riding an ass, had come to the church of the convent, where he happened to be, cleaning the sanctuary. The Reverend Prior was absent, the brothers were asleep. She was in haste, she said, and the matter would not allow of delay. She reported that she had killed a man in the wood of La Huerca, to save the life of a gentleman who had been kind to her, who had, indeed, but recently imperiled his own for hers. "If you doubt me," she had said, "go to the forest to such and such a part. There you will find the gentleman asleep. He has a crucifix of mine. The dead man lies not far away, with his own knife near him, with which I killed him. Now," she had said, "I trust you to report all I have said to that gentleman, for I must be off."

"Good God!" said Manvers again.

"God indeed is the only good," said Fray Juan,

"and His ways past finding out. But I have no reason to doubt this girl's story. She told me, moreover, the name of the man—or his names, as you may say."

"He had more than one then?" Manvers asked him, but without interest. The dead was nothing to him, but the deed was much. This wild girl, who had been sleek and kissing but a few hours before, now stood robed in tragic weeds, fell purpose in her green eyes! And her child's mouth—stretched to murder! And her youth—hardy enough to stab!

"The unfortunate young man," said Fray Juan, "was the son of a more unfortunate father; but the name that he used was not that of his house. His father, it seems——" but Manvers stopped him.

"Excuse me—I don't care about his father or his names. Tell me anything more that the girl had to say."

"I have told you everything, señor caballero," said Fray Juan; "and I will only add that you are not to suppose that I am violating the confidences of God. Far from that. She made no confession in the true sense, though she promised me that she would not fail to do so at the earliest moment. I had it urgently from herself that I should seek you out with her tale, and rehearse it to you. In justice to her, I am now to ask you if it is true, so far as you are concerned in it."

Manvers replied, "It's perfectly true. I found her in bad company at Palencia; a pack of ruffians was about her, and she might have been killed. I got her out of their hands, knocked about and wounded, and brought her so far on the road to the first convent I could come at. That poor devil there overtook us about a league from the wood. She had nothing to say to him, nor he to her, but I

remember noticing that she didn't seem happy after he had joined us. He had been her lover, I suppose?"

"She gave me to understand that," said Fray Juan gravely. Manvers here started at a memory.

"By the Lord," he cried, "I'll tell you something. When we got to the wood, I wanted to bathe in the river, and was going to leave those two together. Well, she was in a taking about that. She wanted to come with me—there was something of a scene." He recalled her terror, and Esteban's snarling lip. "I might have saved all this—but how was I to know? I blame myself. But what puzzles me still is why the man should have wanted my life. Can you explain that?"

Fray Juan was discreet. "Robbery," he suggested, but Manvers laughed.

"I travel light," he said. "He must have seen that I was not his game. No, no," he shook his head. "It couldn't have been robbery."

Fray Juan, I say, was discreet; and it was no business of his. But it was certainly in his mind to say that Esteban need not have been the robber, nor Manvers's portmanteau the booty. However, he was silent, until the Englishman muttered, "God in heaven, what a country!" and then he took up his parable.

"All countries are very much the same, as I take it, since God made them all together, and put man up to be the master of them, and took the woman out of his side to be his blessing and curse at once. The place whence she was taken, they say, can never fully be healed until she is restored to it; and when that is done, it is not a certain cure. Such being the plan of this world, it does not become us to quarrel with its manifestations here or there. Señor caballero, if you are ready I will proceed. Assistance at the feet, a handful of earth at the proper mo-

ment are all I shall ask of you." He slipped a surplice over his head. The office was said.

"Fray Juan," said Manvers at the end, "will you take this trifle from me? A mass, I suppose, for that poor devil's soul would not come amiss."

Fray Juan took that as a sign of grace, and was glad that he had held his tongue. "Far from it," he said, "it would be extremely proper. It shall be offered, I promise you."

"Now," said Manvers after a pause, "I wonder if you can tell me this. Which way did she go off?"

Fray Juan shook his head. "*No lo se*. She came to me in the church, and spoke, and passed like the angel of death. May she go with God!"

"I hope so," said Manvers. Then he looked into the placid face of the brown friar. "But I must find her somehow." Upon that addition he shut his mouth with a snap. The survey which he had to endure from Fray Juan's patient eyes was the best answer to it.

"Oh, but I must, you know," he said.

"Better not, my son," said Fray Juan. "It seems to me that you have seen enough. Your motives will be misunderstood."

Manvers laughed. "They are rather obscure to me—but I can't let her pay for my fault."

"You may make her pay double," said Fray Juan.

"No," said Manvers decisively, "I won't. It's my turn to pay now."

The Friar shrugged. "It is usually the woman who pays. But, *lo que ha de ser* . . . !"

The everlasting phrase! "That proverb serves you well in Spain, Fray Juan," said Manvers, who was in a staring fit.

"It is all we have, that matters. Other nations have to learn it; here we know it."

Manvers mounted his horse and, stooping from the saddle, offered his hand. "*Adios*, Fray Juan."

"*Vaya Vd. con Dios!*" said the friar and watched him away. "*Pobrecita!*" he said to himself—"unhappy Manuela!"

CHAPTER VIII

REFLECTIONS OF AN ENGLISHMAN

BUT Manvers was well upon his way, riding with squared jaw, with rein and spur toward Valladolid. He neither whistled nor chanted to the air; he was *vacuus viator* no longer, traveled not for pleasure but to get over the leagues. For him this country of distances and great air was not Castile, but Broceliande; a land of enchantments and pain. He was no longer fancy-free, but bound to a quest. Consider the issue of this day of his. From bathing in pastoral he had been suddenly soused into tragedy's seething-pot. His idyl of the tanned gipsy with her glancing eyes and warm lips had been spattered out with a brushful of blood; the scene was changed from sunny life to wan death. Here were the staring eyes of a dead man, and his mouth twisted awry in its last agony. He could not away with the shock, nor divest himself of a share in it. If he, by mischance, had taken up with Manuela, he had taken up with Esteban too.

The vanished players in the drama loomed in his mind larger for that fateful last act. The tragic shock and the mask enhanced them. What mystery lay behind Manuela's sidelong eyes? What sin or suffering? What knowledge, how gained, justified Esteban's wizened saws? These two were wise before their time; when they ought to have been flirting on the brink of life, here they were, breasting the great flood, familiar with death, hating, and stabbing!

A pretty child with a knife in her hand; and a boy murdered—what a country! And where stood he, Manvers, the squire of Somerset, with his thirty years, his university education and his seat on the bench? Exactly level with the curate to be counted on for an archery meeting! Well enough for diversion; but when serious affairs were on hand, sent out of the way. Was it not so, that he, the child of the party, was dismissed to bathe while his elders fought out their deadly quarrel? I put it in the interrogative; but he himself smarted under the answer to it. And although he never formulated the thought, and made no plans, and could make none, I have no doubt but that his wounded self-esteem, seeking a salve, found it in the assurance that he would protect Manuela from the consequences of her desperate act; that his protection was his duty and her need. The English mind works that way; we cannot endure a breath upon our fair surface. We direct the operations of this world, or the devil's in it.

Manvers was not, of course, in love with Manuela. He was sentimentally engaged in her affairs, and very sure that they were, and must be, his own. Yet I don't know whether the waking dream which he had upon the summit of that plateau of brown rock which bounds Valladolid upon the north was the cause or consequence of his implication.

He had climbed this sharp ridge, because a track wavered up it which cut off some miles of the road. It was not easy going by any means, but the view rewarded him. The land stretched away to the four quarters of the compass and disappeared into a copper-brown haze. He stood well above the plain, which seemed infinite. Cornland and waste, river-bed and moor, were laid out below him as in a geographer's model. He thought that he stood up there apart, contemplating time and existence. He

was indeed upon the convex of the world, projecting from it into illimitable space, consciously sharing its mighty surge.

This did not belittle him. On the contrary, he felt something of the helmsman's pride, something of the captain's on the bridge. He was driving the world. He soared, perched up there apart from men and their concerns. All Spain lay at his feet; he marked the way it must go. It was possible for him now to watch a man crawl, like a maggot, from his cradle, and urge a painful way to his grave. And, to his exalted eye, from cradle to grave was but a span's length.

From such sublime investigation it was but a step to sublimity itself. His soul seemed separate from his body; he was dispassionate, superhuman, all-seeing and all-comprehending. Now he could see men as winged ants, crossing each other, nearing, drifting apart, interweaving, floating in a cloud, blown high, blown low by wafts of air; and here, presently, came one, Manvers, and there, driven by a gust, went another, Manuela.

At these two insects, as one follows idly one gull in a flock, he could look with interest, and without emotion. He saw them drift, touch, and part, and each be blown its way, helpless mote in the dust of the great plain. From one to the other he turned his eyes. The Manvers gnat flew the straighter course, holding to an upper current; the Manuela wavered, but tended ever to a lower plane. The wind from the mountains of Asturias freshened and blew over him. In a singular moment of divination he saw the two insects of his vision caught in the draught and whirled together again. A spiral flight upward was begun; in ever-narrowing circles they climbed, bid fair to soar. They reached a steadier stream, they sped along together; but then, as a gust took them, they dipped below it and stead-

ily declined, wavering, whirling about each other. Down and down they went, until they were lost to his eye in the dust of heat. He saw them no more.

Manvers came to himself, and shook his senses back into his head. The sun was sinking over Portugal, the evening wind was chill. Had he been dreaming? What sense of fate was upon him? "Come up, Rosinante, take me out of the cave of Montesinos." He guided his horse in and out of the boulder-strewn track to the edge of the plateau; and there before him, many leagues away, like a patch of whitewash splodged down upon a blue field, lay Valladolid, the city of burning and pride.

CHAPTER IX

A VISIT TO THE JEWELER'S

IF GOD in His majesty made the Spains, and the nations which people them, perhaps it was His mercy that convoked the Spanish cities—as His servant Philip piled rock upon rock and called it Madrid—and made cess-pits for the cleansing of the country.

Behold the Castilian, the Valencian, the Murcian on his glebe, you find an exact relation established; the one exhales the other. The man is what his country is, tragic, hag-ridden, yet impassive, patient under the sun. He stands for the natural verities. You cannot change him, move, nor hurt him. He can earn neither your praises nor reproach. As well might you blame the staring noon of summer or throw a kind word to the everlasting hills. The bleak pride of the Castellano, the flint and steel of Aragon, the languor which veils Andalusian fire—traveling the lands which gave them

birth, you find them scored in large over mountain and plain and river-bed, and bitten deep into the hearts of the indwellers. They are as seasonable there as the flowers of waste places, and will charm you as much. So Spanish travel is one of the restful relaxations, because nothing jars upon you. You feel that you are assisting a destiny, not breaking it. Not discovery is before you so much as realization.

But in the city Spanish blood festers, and all that seemed plausible in the open air is now monstrous, full of vice and despair. Whereas outside, the man stood like a rock, and let Fate seam or bleach him bare, here, within walls, he rages, shows his teeth, blasphemes, or sinks into sloth. You will find him heaped against the walls like ordure, hear him howl for blood in the bull-ring, appraising women as if they were dainties in the *alamedas*, loaf, scratch, pry where none should pry, go begging with his sores, trade his own soul or his mother's. His pride becomes insolence, his tragedy hideous revolt, his impassivity swinish, his rock of sufficiency a rock of offence. God in His mercy, or the devil in his despite, made the cities of Spain.

And yet the man, so superbly at his ease in his enormous spaces, is his own conclusion when he goes to town; the permutation is logical. He is too strong a thing to break his nature; it will be aggravated but not deflected. Leave him to swarm in the *plaza* and seek his nobler brother. Go out by the Gate, descend the winding suburb, which gives you the burned plains and far blue hills, now on one hand, now on the other, as you circle down and down, with the walls mounting as you fall; touch once more the dusty earth, traverse the deep shade of the ilex-avenue; greet the ox-teams, the filing mules, as they creep up the hill to the town: you are bound for their true, great Spain. And though it

may be ten days since you saw it, or fifty years, you will find nothing altered. The Spaniard is still the flower of his rocks. *O dura tellus Iberiæ!*

From the window of his garret Don Luis Ramonez de Alavia could overlook the town wall, and by craning his neck out sideways could have seen, if he had a mind, the cornice angle of the palace of his race. It was a barrack in these days, and had been so since ruin had settled down on the Ramonez with the rest of Valladolid. That had been in the sixteenth century, but no Ramonez had made any effort to repair it. Every one of them did as Don Luis was doing now, and accepted misery in true Spanish fashion. Not only did he never speak of it, he never thought of it either. It was; therefore it had to be.

He rose at dawn, every day of his life, and took his sop in coffee in his bedgown, sitting on the edge of his bed. He heard mass in the Church of Las Angustias, in the same chapel at the same hour. Once a month he communicated, and then the sop was omitted. He was shaved in the barber's shop—Gomez the Sevillian kept it—at the corner of the *plaza*. Gomez, the little, dapper, black-eyed man, was a friend of his—his newspaper and his doctor. He took a high line with Gomez, as you may when you owe a man twopence a week.

That over, he took the sun in the *plaza*, up and down the centre line of flags in fine weather, up and down the arcade if it rained. He saw the *diligencia* from Madrid come in, he saw the *diligencia* for Madrid go out. He knew, and accepted, the salutes of every *arriero* who worked in and out of the city, and passed the time of day with Micael the lame water-seller, who never failed to salute him.

At noon he ate an onion and a piece of cheese, and then he dozed till three. As the clock of the University struck that hour he put on his *capa*—

summer and winter he wore it, with melancholy and good reason; by ten minutes past he was entering the shop of Sebastian the goldsmith, in the Plaza San Benito, in the which he sat till dusk, motionless and absorbed in thought, talking little, seeming to observe little, and yet judging everything in the light of strong common sense.

Summer or winter, at dusk he arose, flecked a mote or two of dust from his *capa*, seated his beaver upon his gray head, grasped his malacca, and departed with a "Be with God, my friend." To this Sebastian the goldsmith invariably replied, "At the feet of your grace, Don Luis."

He supped sparingly, and the last act of his day was his one act of luxury: his cup of chocolate or glass of *agraz*, according to the season, at the Café de la Luna in the Plaza Mayor. This was his title to table and chair, and the respect of all Valladolid from dusk until nine—on the last stroke of which, saluting the company, who rose almost to a man, he retired to his garret and thin bed.

Pepe, the head waiter at the Luna, who had been there for thirty years, Gomez, the barber, who was sixty-three and looked forty, Sebastian the goldsmith, well over middle age, and the old priest of Las Angustias, who had confessed him every Friday and said mass at the same altar every morning since his ordination (God knows how long ago) would have testified to the fact that Don Luis had never once varied his daily habits within time of memory.

They would have been wrong of course, like all clean sweepers; for in addition to his inheritance of ruin, misfortunes had graved him deeply. Valladolid knew it well. His wife had left him, his son had gone to the devil. He bore the first blow like a stoic, not moving a muscle nor varying a habit: the second sent him on a journey. The barber, the water-seller, Pepe the waiter, Sebastian the deft

were troubled about him for a week or more. He came back, and hid his wound, speaking to no one of it; and no one dared to pity him. And although he resumed his routine and was outwardly the same man, we may trace to that last stroke of Fortune the wasted splendor of his eyes, the look of a dying stag, which, once seen, haunted the observer. He was extraordinarily handsome, except for his narrow shoulders and hollow eyes, flawlessly clean in person and dress; a tall straight, hawk-nosed, sallow gentleman. The Archbishop of Toledo was his first cousin, a cadet of his house. He was entitled to wear his hat in the presence of the Queen, and he lived upon fivepence a day.

Manvers, reaching Valladolid in the evening, reposed himself for a day or two, and recovered from his shock. He saw the sights, conversed with affability with all and sundry, drank *agraz* in the Café de la Luna. He must have beamed without knowing it upon Don Luis, for his brisk appearance, twisted smile, and abrupt manner were familiar to that watchful gentleman by the time that, sweeping aside the curtain like a buffet of wind, he entered the goldsmith's shop in the Plaza San Benito. He came in a little before twilight one afternoon, holding by a string in one hand some swinging object, taking off his hat with the other as soon as he was past the curtain of the door.

"Can you," he said to Sebastian, in very fair Spanish, "take up a job for me a little out of the common?" As he spoke he swung the object into the air, caught it and enclosed it with his hand. Don Luis, in a dark corner of the shop, sat back in his accustomed chair and watched him. He sat very still, a picture of mournful interest, shrouding his mouth with his hand.

Sebastian, first master of his craft in a city of goldsmiths, was far too much the gentleman to imply

that any command of his customer need not be extraordinary. Bowing with gravity, and adjusting the glasses upon his fine nose, he replied that when he understood the nature of the business he should be better instructed for his answer. Thereupon Manvers opened his hand and passed over the counter a brass crucifix.

It is difficult to disturb the self-possession of a gentleman of Spain; Sebastian did not betray by a twitch what his feelings or thoughts may have been. He gravely scrutinized the battered cross, back and front, was polite enough to ignore the greasy string, and handed it back without a single word. It may have been worth half a *real*; to watch his treatment of it was cheap at a dollar.

Manvers, however, flushed with annoyance, and spoke somewhat loftily. "Am I to understand that you will, or will not oblige me?"

Sebastian temperately replied, "You are to understand, señor caballero, that I am at your disposition, but that also that I do not yet know what you wish me to do." Manvers laughed, and the air was clearer.

"A thousand pardons," he said, "a thousand pardons for my stupidity. I can tell you in two minutes what I want done with this thing." He held it in the flat of his hand, and looked from it to the jeweler, as he succinctly explained his wishes.

"I want you," he said, "to encase this cross completely, in thin gold plates." Conscious of Sebastian's portentous gravity, perhaps of Don Luis in his dark corner, he showed himself a little self-conscious also, and added, "It's a curious desire of mine, I know, but there's a reason for it, which is neither here nor there. Make for me then," he went on, "of thin gold plates, a matrix to hold this cross. It must have a lid, also, which shall open upon hinges, here"—he indicated the precise points

—"and close with a clasp, here. Let the string also be encased in gold. I don't know how you will do it—that is a matter for your skill; but I wish the string to remain where it is, intact, within a gold covering. This casing should be pliable, so that the cross could hang, if necessary, round the neck of a person—as it used to hang. Do I make myself understood?"

The Castilians are not a curious people, but this commission did undoubtedly interest Sebastian the jeweler. Professionally speaking, it was a delicate piece of work; humanly, could have but one explanation. So, at least, he judged.

What Don Luis may have thought of it, there's no telling. If you had watched him closely you would have seen the pupils of his eyes dilate, and then contract—just as those of a caged owl, when he becomes aware of a mouse circling round him.

But while Don Luis could be absorbed in the human problem, it was not so with his friend. Points of detail engaged him in a series of suggestions which threatened to be prolonged, and which maddened the Englishman. Was the outline of the cross to be maintained in the casing? Undoubtedly it was, otherwise you might as well hang a card-case round your neck! The hinges, now—might they not be better here and here, than there and there? Manvers was indifferent as to the hinges. The fastening? Let the fastening be one which could be snapped-to, and open upon a spring. The chain—ah, there was some nicety required for that. From his point of view, Sebastian said, with the light of enthusiasm irradiating his face, that that was the cream of the job.

Manvers, wishing to get out of the shop, begged him to do the best he could, and turned to go. At the door he stopped short and came back. There was one thing more. Inside the lid of the case, in

the centre of the cross, he wished to have engraved the capital letter M, and below that a date—12 May, 1861. That was really all, except that he was staying at the Parador de las Diligencias, and would call in a week's time. He left his card—Mr. Osmund Manvers, Filcote Hall, Taunton; Oxford and Cambridge Club—elegantly engraved. And then he departed, with a jerky salute to Don Luis, grave in his corner.

That card, after many turns back and face, was handed to Don Luis for inspection, while Sebastian looked to him for light over the rim of his spectacles.

"M. for Manvers," he said presently, since Don Luis returned the card without comment. "That is probable, I imagine."

"It is possible," said Don Luis with his grand air of indifference. "With an Englishman anything is possible."

Sebastian did not pretend to be indifferent. He hummed an air, and played it out with his fingers on the counter as he thought. Then he flashed into life. "The twelfth of May! That is just a week ago. I have it, Señor Don Luis! Hear my explanation. This thing of naught was presented to the gentleman upon his birthday—the twelfth of May. The giver was poor, or he would have made a more considerable present; and he was very dear to the gentleman, or he would not have dared to present such a thing. Nor would the gentleman, I think, have treated it so handsomely. Handsomely!" He made a rapid calculation. "*Ah, que!* He is paying its weight in gold." Now—this was in his air of triumph—*now* what had Don Luis to say?

That weary but unbowed antagonist of hunger and despair, after shrugging his shoulder, considered the matter, while Sebastian waited. "Why,

do you suppose," he asked at length, "that the giver of this thing was a man?"

"I do not suppose it," cried Sebastian, "I never did suppose it. The cross has been worn"—he passed his fingers over its smooth back—"and recently worn. Men do not carry such things about them, unless they are——"

"What this gentleman is," said Don Luis. "A woman gave him this. A wench." Sebastian bowed, and with sparkling eyes readjusted his inferences.

"That being admitted, we are brought a little further. M. does not stand for Manvers—for what gentleman would give himself the trouble to engrave his own name upon a cross? It is the initial of the giver's name—and observe, Señor Don Luis, he is very familiar with her, since he knows her but by one." He looked through his shop window to the light, as he began a catalogue. "María—Mariquita—Maritornes—Margerita—Mariana—Mercedes—Miguela——" He stopped short, and his eyes encountered those of his friend, fast upon him, ominous and absorbing. He showed a certain confusion. "Any one of these names, it might be, Señor Don Luis."

"Or Manuela," said the other, still regarding him steadily.

"Or Manuela—true," said Sebastian with a bow, and a perceptible deepening of color.

"In any case"—Don Luis rose, removed a speck of dust from his *capa*, and adjusted his beaver—"In any case, my friend, we assume the 12th of May to be our gentleman's birthday. *Adiós, hermano.*"

Sebastian was about to utter his usual ceremonial assurance, when a thought drove it out of his head.

"Stay, stay a moment, Don Luis of my soul!" He snapped his fingers together in his excitement.

"*Ah que!*" muttered Don Luis, who had his hand upon the latch.

"A birthday—what is it? A thing of every year. Is he likely to receive a brass crucifix worth two maravedis every year, and every year to sheathe it in gold? Never! This marks a solemnity—a great solemnity. Listen, I will tell you. It marks the end of a *liaison*. She has left him—but tenderly; or he has left her—but regretfully. It becomes a touching affair. Do you not agree with me?"

Don Luis raised his eyebrows. "I have no means of agreeing with you, Sebastian. It may mark the end of a story—or the beginning. Who knows?" He threw out his arms and let them drop. "Señor God, who cares?"

CHAPTER X

FURTHER EPISODES IN THE LIFE OF DON LUIS RAMONEZ

GOLDSMITHING is the art of Valladolid, and Sebastian was its master. That was the opinion of the mystery, and his own opinion. He never concealed it; but he had now to confess that Manvers had given him a task worthy of his powers. To cut out and rivet the links of the chain, which was to sheathe a piece of string and leave it all its pliancy—"I tell you Don Luis of my soul," he said, peering up from his board, "there is no man in our mystery who could cope with it—and very few frail ladies who could be worthy of it." Don Luis added that there could be few young men who could be capable of commanding it; but Sebastian had now conceived an admiration for his client.

"*Fantasia, vaya!* The English have the hearts of poets in the bodies of bees. Did your grace ever hear of Doña Juanita—who in the French war ran half over Andalusia in pursuit of an Englishman? I heard my father tell the tale. Not his person claimed her, but his heart of a poet. Well, he married her, and from camp to camp she trailed after him, while he helped our nation beat Buonaparte. But one day they received the hospitality of a certain hidalgo, and had removed many leagues from him by the next night, when they camped beside a river. Dinner was eaten in the tents, and dessert served up in a fine bowl. '*Sola!*' says the Englishman, 'that bowl—it is not ours, my heart?' 'No,' says Juanita, 'it is the hidalgo's, and was packed with our furniture in the hurry of departing.' '*Por Dios!*' says the Englishman, 'it must be returned to him.' But how? He could not go himself, for at that moment there entered an alguazil with news of the enemy. What then? 'Juanita will go,' says the Englishman, and went out, buckling his sword. Señor Don Luis, she went, on horseback, all those leagues, beset with foes, in the night, and rendered back the bowl. I tell you, the heart of poets!"

Don Luis, who had been nodding his high approval, now stared. "*Ah, que!* But the poet was Doña Juanita, it seems to me," he said.

"Pardon me, dear sir, not at all. Our Spanish ladies are not fond of travel. It was the Englishman who inspired her. He was a poet with a vision. In his vision he saw her going. Safely, then, he could say, she will go, because he, to whom time was nothing, saw her in the act. He did not give directions—he went out to engage the enemy. Then she went—*vaya!*"

"You may be sure," Sebastian went on, "that my client is a poet and a fine fellow. You may be

sure that the gift of this trifle has touched his heart. It was not given lightly. The measure of his care is the measure of its worth in his eyes."

Don Luis allowed the possibility, by raising his eyebrows and tilting his head sideways; a shrug with an accent, as it were. Then he allowed Sebastian to clinch his argument by saying that the Englishman seemed to be getting the better of his emotion; for here was a week, said he, and he had not once been into the shop to inquire for his relic. Sebastian was down upon the admission. "What did I tell you, my friend? Is not that the precise action of our Englishman who said, 'Juanita will ride,' and went out and left her at the table? Precisely the same! And Juanita rode—and I, by God, have wrought at the work he gave me to do, and finished it. *Vaya*, Don Luis, it is not amiss."

It had to be confessed that it was not; and Manvers calling one morning later was as warm in his praises as his Spanish and his temperament would admit. He paid the bill without demur.

Sebastian, though he was curious, was discreet. Don Luis, however, thought proper to remark upon the crucifix, when he chanced to meet its owner in the Church of Las Angustias.

That church contains a famous statue of Juan de Juni's, a *Mater dolorosa* most tragic and memorable. Manvers, in his week's prowling of the city, had come upon it by accident, and visited it more than once. She sits, Our Lady of Sorrows, upon a rock, in her widow's weeds, exhibiting a grief so intense that she may well have been made larger than life, in order to support a misery which would crush a mortal woman. It is so fine, this emblem of divine suffering, that it obscures its tawdry surroundings, its pinchbeck tabernacle, gilding and red paint. When she is carried in a *paso*, as whiles she is, no spangled robe is put over her, no priest's

vestment, no crown or veil. Seven swords are driven into her bosom: she is unconscious of them. Her wounds are within; but they call her in Valladolid Señora de los Cuchillos.

It was in the presence of this august mourner that Manvers was found by Don Luis Ramonez after mass. He had been present at the ceremony, but not assisting, and had his crucifix open in the palm of his hand when the other rose from his knees and saw him.

After a moment's hesitation the old gentleman stayed till the worshippers had departed, and then drew near to Manvers, and bowed ceremoniously.

"You will forgive me for remarking upon what you have in your hand, señor caballero," he said, "when I tell you that I was present, not only at the commissioning of the work, but at its daily progress to the perfection it now bears. My friend, Don Sebastian, had every reason to be contented with his masterpiece. I am glad to learn from him that you were no less satisfied."

Manvers, who had immediately shut down his hand, now opened it. "Yes," he said, "it's a beautiful piece of work. I am more than pleased."

"It is a setting," said Don Luis, "which, in this country, we should give to a relic of the True Cross."

Manvers looked quickly up. "I know, I know. It must seem to you a piece of extravagance on my part——. But there were reasons, good reasons. I could hardly have done less."

Don Luis bowed gravely, but said nothing. Manvers felt impelled to further discussion. Had he been a Spaniard he would have left the matter where it was; but he was not, so he went awkwardly on.

"It's a queer story. For some reason or another I don't care to speak of it. The person who

gave me this trinket did me—or intended me—an immense service, at a great cost.”

“She, too,” said Don Luis, looking at the Dolorosa, “may have had her reasons.”

“It *was* a woman,” said Manvers, with quickening color, “I see no harm in saying so. I was going to tell you that she believed herself indebted to me for some trifling attention I had been able to show her previously. That is how I explain her giving me the crucifix. It was her way of thanking me—a pretty way. I was touched.”

Don Luis waved his hand. “It is very evident, Señor caballero. Your way of recording it is exemplary: her way, perhaps, was no less so.”

“You will think me of a sentimental race,” Manvers laughed, “and I won’t deny it—but it’s a fact that I was touched.”

Don Luis, who, throughout the conversation, had been turning the crucifix about, now examined the inscription. He held it up to the light that he might see it better. Manvers observed him, but did not take the hint which was thus, rather bluntly, conveyed him. The case once more in his breast-pocket, he saluted Don Luis and went his way.

Shortly afterward he left Valladolid on horseback.

Perhaps a week went by, perhaps ten days; and then Don Luis had a visitor one night in the Café de la Luna, a mean-looking, pale, and harassed visitor with a close-cropped head, whose eyebrows flickered like summer fires in the sky, who would not sit down, who kept his felt hat rolled in his hands, whose deference was extreme, and accepted as a matter of course. He was known in Valladolid, it seemed. Pepe knew him, called him Tormillo.

“*A sus pies*,” was the burthen of his news so far, “*a los pies de Vd.*, Señor Don Luis.”

Don Luis took no sort of notice of him, but con-

tinued to smoke his cigarette. He allowed the man to stand shuffling about for some three minutes before he asked him what he wanted.

That was exactly what Tormillo found it so difficult to explain. His eyebrows ran up to hide in his hair, his hands crushed his hat into his chest. "*Quién sabe?*" he gasped to the company, and Don Luis drained his glass.

Then he looked at the man. "Well, Tormillo?"

Tormillo shifted his feet. "Ha!" he gasped, "who knows what the señores may be pleased to say? How am I to know? They ask for an interview, a short interview in the light of the moon. Two caballeros in the Campo Grande—ready to oblige your Excellency."

"And who, pray, are these caballeros? And why do they stand in the Campo?" Don Luis asked in his grandest manner. Tormillo wheedled in his explanations.

"That which they have to report, Señor Don Luis," he began, craning forward, whispering, grinning his extreme good will—"Oho! it is not matter for the Café. It is matter for the moon, and the shade of trees. And these caballeros——"

Don Luis paid the hovering Pepe his shot, rose and threw his cloak over his shoulder. "Follow me," he said, and, saluting the company, walked into the *plaza*. He crossed it, and entered a narrow street, where the overhanging houses make a perpetual shade. There he stopped. "Who are these gentlemen?" he said abruptly. Tormillo seemed to be swimming.

"Worthy men, Señor Don Luis, worthy of confidence. To me they said little; it is for your grace's ear. They have titles. They are written across their foreheads. It is not for me to speak. Who am I, Tormillo, but the slave of your nobility?"

The more he prevaricated, the less Don Luis pur-

sued him. Stiffening his neck, shrouded in his cloak, he now stalked stately from street to street until he came to the Puerta del Carmen, through the battlements of which the moon could be seen looking coldly upon Valladolid. He was known to the gatekeeper, who bowed, and opened him the wicket.

The great space of the Campo Grande lay like a silver pool, traversed only by the thin shadows of the trees. At the further end of the avenue which leads directly from the gate two men were standing close together. Beyond them a little were two horses, one snuffing at the bare earth, the other with his head thrown up, and ears pricked forward. Don Luis turned sharply on his follower.

"Guardia Civil?"

"*Sí, señor, sí,*" whispered Tormillo, and his teeth clattered like castanets. Don Luis went on without faltering, and did not stay until he was within easy talking distance of the two men. Then it was that he threw up his head, with a fine gesture of race, and acknowledged the saluting pair. Tormillo, at this point, turned aside and stood miserably under a tree, wringing his hands.

"Good evening to you, friends. I am Don Luis Ramonez, at your service."

The pair looked at each other: presently one of them spoke.

"At the feet of Señor Don Luis."

"Your business is pressing, and secret?"

"*Sí, señor Don Luis,* pressing and secret, and serious. We have to ask your grace to be prepared."

"I thank you. My preparations are made already. Present your report."

He took a cigarette from his pocket, and lit it with a steady hand. The flame of the match

showed his brows and deep-set eyes. If ever a man had acquaintance with grief printed upon him, it was he. But throughout the interview the glowing weed could be seen, a waxing and waning rim of fire, lighting up his gray moustache, and then hovering in mid-air, motionless.

The officer appointed to speak presented his report in these terms.

"We were upon our round about the wood of La Huerca six days ago, and had occasion to visit the Convent of La Peña. Upon information received from the Prior we questioned a certain religious, who admitted that he had recently buried a man in the wood. After some hesitation, which we had the means of overcoming, he conducted us to the grave. We disinterred the deceased, who had been murdered. Señor Don Luis——"

"Proceed," said Don Luis coldly. "I am listening."

"Sir," said the officer, "it was the body of a young man who had come from Pobledo. He called himself Esteban Vincaz." Tormillo, under his tree across the avenue, howled and rent himself. Don Luis heard him.

"Precisely," he said to the officer. "Have the goodness to wait while I silence that dog over there." He went rapidly over the roadway to Tormillo, grasped him by the shoulder, and spoke to him in a vehement whisper. That was the single action by which he betrayed himself. He returned to his interview.

"I am now at leisure again. Let us resume our conversation. You questioned the religious, you say? When did the assassination take place?"

"Don Luis, it was upon the twelfth of May."

"Ah," said Don Luis, "the twelfth of May? And did he know who committed it?"

"Señor Don Luis, it was a woman."

The wasted eyes were upon the speaker, and made him nervous. He turned away his head. But Don Luis continued his cross-examination.

"She was a fair woman, I believe? A Valencian?"

"*Señor, sí,*" said the man. "Fair and false, a Valencian."

Of Valencia they say, "*La carne es herba, la herba agua, el hombre mujer, la mujer nada.*"

"Her name," said Don Luis, "began with M."

"*Señor, sí.* It was Manuela, the dancing girl—called La Valenciana, La Fierita, and a dozen other things. But, pardon me the liberty, your worship has been informed?"

"I knew something," said Don Luis, "and suspected something. I am much obliged to you, my friends. Justice will be done. Good night to you." He turned, touching the brim of his hat; but the man went after him.

"A thousand pardons, Señor Don Luis, but we have our duty to the state."

"Eh!" said Don Luis sharply. "Well, then, you had best set to work upon it."

"If your worship has any knowledge of the whereabouts of this woman——"

"I have none," said Don Luis. "If I had I would impart it, and when I have it shall be yours. Go now with God."

He crossed the pathway of light, laid his hand on the shoulder of the weeping Tormillo. "Come, I need you," he said. Tormillo crept after him to his lodging, and the Guardias Civiles made themselves cigarettes.

The following day a miracle was reported in Valladolid. Don Luis Ramonez was not in his place in the Café de la Luna. Sebastian the goldsmith, Gomez the pert barber, Pepe the waiter, Micael the water-seller of the Plaza Mayor knew

nothing of his whereabouts. The old priest of Las Angustias might have told if his lips had not been sealed. But in the course of the next morning it was noised about that his worship had left the city for Madrid, accompanied by a servant.

CHAPTER XI

GIL PÉREZ DE SEGOVIA

BEFORE he left Valladolid Manvers had sold his horse for what he could get, and had taken the *diligencia* as far as Segovia. Not a restful conveyance, the *diligencia* of Spain: therefore, in that wonderful city of towers, silence, and guarded windows he stayed a full week, in order, as he put it, that his bones might have time to set.

There it was that he became the property of Gil Pérez, who met him one day on the doorstep of his hotel, saluted him with a flourish and said in dashing English, "Good morning, Mister. I am the man for you. I speak English very good, Dutch, what you like. I show you my city; you pleased—eh?" He had a merry brown face, half of a quiz and half of a rogue, was well-dressed in black, wore his hat, which was now in his hand, rather over one ear. Manvers met his saucy eyes for a minute, saw anxiety behind their impudence, could not be angry, burst into a laugh, and was heartily joined by Gil Pérez.

"That very good," said Gil. "You laugh, I very glad. That tell me is all right." He immediately became serious. "I serve you well, sir, there's no mistake. I am Gil Pérez, too well known to the landlord of this hotel. You see?" He showed his teeth, which were excellent, and he had also, Man-

vers reflected, shown his hand, for what it was worth—which argued a certain security.

"Gil Pérez," he said, on an impulse, "I shall take you at your word. Do you wait where you are." He turned back into the inn and sought his landlord, who was smoking a cigar in the kitchen while the maids bustled about. From him he learned what there was to be known of Gil Pérez; that he was a native of Cadiz who had been valet to an English officer at Gibraltar, followed him out to the Crimea, nursed him through dysentery (of which he had died), and had then begged his way home again to Spain. He had been in Segovia a year or two, acting as guide or interpreter when he could, living on nothing a day mostly, and doing pretty well on it.

"He has been in prison, I shall not conceal from your honor," said the landlord. "He stabbed a man under the ribs because he had insulted the English. Gil Pérez loves your notion. He considers you to be the natural protectors of the poor. He will serve you well, you may be sure."

"That's what he told me himself," said Manvers.

The landlord rested his eyes—large, brown, and solemn as those of an ox—upon his guest. "He told you the truth, señor. He will serve you better than he would serve me. You will be his god."

"I hope not," said Manvers, and went out to the door again. Gil Pérez who had been smoking out in the sun, threw his *papelillo* away, stood at attention and saluted smartly.

"What was the name of your English master?" Manvers asked him. Gil replied at once.

"'E call Capitán Rodney. Royal Horse Artillery. 'E say 'Gunner.' 'E was a gentleman, sir."

"I'm sure he was," said Manvers.

"My master speak very good Spanish. 'E say 'damn your eyes' all the time; and call me 'Little

devil' just the same. Ah," said Gil Pérez, shaking his head. "'E very good gentleman to me, sir—good master. I love 'im. 'E dead." For a minute he gazed wistfully at the sky; then, as if to clinch the sad matter, he turned to Manvers. "I bury 'im all right," he said briskly, and nodded inward the fact.

Manvers considered for a moment. "I'll give you," he said, and looked at Gil keenly as he said it, "I'll give you one peseta a day." He saw his eyes fade and grow blank, though the genial smile hovered still on his lips. Then the light broke out upon him again.

"All right, sir," he said. "I take, and thank you very much."

Manvers said immediately, "I'll give you two," and Gil Pérez accepted the correction silently, with a bow. By the end of the day they were on the footing of friends, but not without one short crossing of swords. After dinner, when Manvers strolled to the door of the inn, he found his guide waiting for him. Gil was in a confidential humor, it seemed.

"You care see something, sir?"

"What sort of a thing, for instance?" he was asked.

Gil Pérez shrugged. "What you like, sir." He peered into his patron's face, and there was infinite suggestion in his next question. "You see fine women?"

Manvers had expected something of the sort and had a steely stare ready for him. "No, thanks," he said drily, and Gil saluted and withdrew. He was at the door next morning, affable yet respectful, confident in his powers of pleasing, of interesting, of arranging everything; but he never presumed again. He knew his affair.

Three days' sightseeing taught master and man their bearings. Manvers got into the way of for-

getting that Gil Pérez was there, except when it was convenient to remember him; Gil, on his part, learned to distinguish between his patron's soliloquies and his conversation. He never made a mistake after the third day. If Manvers, in the course of a ramble, stopped abruptly, buried a hand in his beard and said aloud that he would be shot if he knew which way to turn, Gil Pérez watched him closely, but made no remark.

Even, "Look here, you know, this won't do," failed to move him beyond a state of tension, like that of a cat on the act to pounce. He had found out that Manvers talked to himself, and was put about by interruptions; and if you realize how sure and certain he was that he knew much better than his master what was the very thing, or the last thing, he ought to do, you will see that he must have put considerable restraint upon himself.

But loyalty was his supreme virtue. From the moment Manvers had taken him on at two pesetas a day he became the perfect servant of a perfect master. He could have no doubt, naturally, of his ability to serve—his belief in himself never wavered; but he had none either in his gentleman's right to command. I believe if Manvers had desired him to cut off his right hand he would have complied with a smile. "Very good, master. You want my 'and? I do."

If he had a failing, it was this: nothing on earth would induce him to talk his own language to his master. He was unmoved by encouragement, unconvinced by the fluency of Manvers's Castilian periods; he would have risked his place upon this one point of honor.

"Espanish no good, sir, for you an' me," he said once with an irresistible smile. "Too damsilly for you. Capitán Rodney, 'e teach me Englisha speech. Now I know it too much. No, sir. You know

what they say—them *filosofistas*?" he asked him on another encounter. "They say, God Almighty 'e maka this world in Latin—ver' fine for that big job. Whata come next? Adamo 'e love 'is lady in Espanish—esplendid for maka women love. That old snaka 'e speak to 'er in French—that persuade 'er too much. Then Eva she esplain in Italian—ver' soft espeech. Adamo 'e say, That all righta. Then God Almighty ver' savage. 'E turn roun' on them two. 'E say, That be damned, 'e say, in English. They understand 'im too much. Believe me—is the best for you an' me, sir. All people understan' thata espeech."

Taken as a guide, he installed himself as body servant, silently, tactfully, but infallibly. Manvers caught him one morning putting boots by his door. "Hulloa, Gil Pérez," he called out, "what are you doing with my boots?"

Gil's confidential manner was a thing to drink. "That *mozo*, master—'e fool. 'E no maka shine. I show 'im how Capitán Rodney lika 'is boots. See 'is a face in 'em." He smirked at his own as he spoke, and was so pleased that Manvers said no more.

The same night he stood behind his master's chair. Manvers contented himself by staring at him. Gil Pérez smiled with his bright eyes and became exceedingly busy. Manvers continued to stare, and presently Gil Pérez was observed to be sweating. The poor fellow was self-conscious for once in his life. Obligated to justify himself, he leaned to his master's ear.

"That *mozo*, sir, too much of a dam fool. Imposs' you estand 'im. I tell 'im, This gentleman no like garlic down 'is neck. I say, you breathe too 'ard, my fellow—too much garlic. This gentleman say, Crickey, what a stink! That no good."

There was no comparison between the new service and the old; and so it was throughout. Gil

Pérez drove out the chambermaid and made Manvers's bed; he brushed his clothes as well as his boots, changed his linen for him, saw to the wash—in fine, he made himself indispensable. But when Manvers announced his coming departure, there was a short tussle, preceded by a pause for breath.

Gil Pérez inquired of the sky, searched up the street, searched down. A group of brown urchins hovered, as always, about the stranger, ready to risk and deadly sin for the chance of a maravedí or the stump of a cigar.

Gil snatched at one by the bare shoulder and spoke him burning words. "*Canalla*," he cried to him, "horrible flea! Thou makest the air to reek—impossible to breathe. Fly, thou gnat of the midden, or I crack thee on my thumb."

The boys retired swearing, and Gil, with desperate calling-up of reserves, faced his ordeal. "Ver' good, master, we go when you like. We see Escorial—fine place—see La Granja, come by Madrid thata way. I get 'orses 'ow you please." Then he had an inspiration, and beamed all over his face. "Or mules! We 'ave mules. Mules cheap, 'orses dear too much in Segovia."

Manvers could see very well what he was driving at. "I think I'll take the *diligencia*, Gil Pérez."

Gil shrugged. "'Ow you like, master. Fine air, thata way. Ver' cheap way to go. You take my advice, you go *coupé*. I go *redonda* more cheap. Give me your passport, master—I take our place."

"Yes, I know," said Manvers. "But I'm not sure that I need take you on with me. I travel without a servant mostly."

Gil Pérez grappled with his task. He dropped his air of assumption; his eyes glittered.

"I save you money, master. You find me good servant—make a difference, yes?"

"Oh, a great deal of difference," Manvers ad-

mitted. "I like you; you suit me excellently well, but——" He considered what he had to do in Madrid, and frowned over it. Manuela was there, and he wished to see Manuela. He had not calculated upon having a servant when he had promised himself another interview with her, and was not at all sure that he wanted one. On the other hand, Gil might be useful in a number of ways—and his discretion and tact were proved. While he hesitated, Gil Pérez saw his opportunity and darted in.

"I know Madrid too much," he said. "All the ways, all the peoples I know. Imposs' you live 'appy in Madrid withouta me." He smiled all over his face—and when he did that he was irresistible. "You try," he concluded, just like a child.

Manvers, on an impulse, drew from his pocket the gold-set crucifix. "Look at that, Gil Pérez," he said, and put it in his hands.

Gil looked gravely at it, back and front. He nodded his approval. "Pretty thing"—and he decided offhand. "In Valladolid they make."

"Open it," said Manvers; but it was opened before he had spoken. Gil's eyes widened, while the pupils of them contracted intensely. He read the inscription, pondered it; to the crucifix itself he gave but a momentary glance. Then he shut the case and handed it back to his master.

"I find 'er for you," he said soberly; and that settled it.

CHAPTER XII

A GLIMPSE OF MANUELA

GIL PÉREZ had listened gravely to the tale which his master told him. He nodded once or twice, and asked a few questions in the course of the narrative—questions of which Manvers could

not immediately see the bearing. One was concerned with her appearance. Did she wear rings in her ears? He had to confess that he had not observed. Another was interjected when he described how she had grown stiff under his arm when Esteban drew alongside.

Gil had nodded rapidly, and became impatient as Manvers insisted on the fact. "Of course, of course!" he had said, and then he asked, Did she stiffen her arm and point the first and last fingers of it, keeping the middle pair clenched?

Manvers understood him, and replied that he had not noticed any such thing, but that he did not believe she feared the Evil Eye. He went on with his story uninterrupted until the climax. He had found the crucifix, he said, on his return from bathing, and had been pleased with her for leaving it. Then he related the discovery of the body and his talk with Fray Juan de la Cruz. Here came in Gil's third question. "Did she return your 'andkerchief?" he asked—and sharply.

Manvers started. "By George, she never did!" he exclaimed. "And I don't wonder at it," he said, on reflection. "If she had to knife that fellow, and confess to Fray Juan, and escape for her life, she had enough to do. Of course, she *may* have left it in the wood."

Gil Pérez pressed his lips together. "She got it still," he said. "We find 'er—I know where to look for it."

If he did he kept his knowledge to himself, though he spoke freely enough of Manuela on the way to Madrid.

"This Manuela," he explained, "is a Valenciana—where you find fair women with black men. Valencianos like Moors—love too much white women. I think Manuela is not Gitanilla; she is what you call a *Alfanalf*. Then she is like the

Gitanas, as proud as a fire, but all the same a Christian—make free with 'erself. A Gitana never dare love Christian man—imposs' she do that. Sometimes all the same she do it. I think Manuela made like that."

Committed to the statement, he presently saw a cheerful solution of it. "Soon see!" he added, and considered other problems. "That dead man follow Manuela to kill 'er," he decided. "When 'e find 'er with you, master, 'e say, 'Now I know why you run, *hija de perra*. Now I kill two and get a 'orse.' You see?"

"Yes," said Manvers, "I see that. And you think that he told her what he meant to do?"

"Of course 'e tell,' said Gil Pérez with scorn. "Make it too bad for 'er. Make 'er feel sick."

"Brute!" cried Manvers; but Gil went blandly on.

"'E 'ate 'er so much that 'e feel 'ungry and thirsty. 'E feed before 'e kill. Must do it—too 'ungry. Then she go near 'im, twisting 'erself about—showing 'erself to please 'im. 'You kiss me, my 'eart,' she say; 'I love you all the same. Kiss me—then you kill.' 'E look at 'er—she very fine girl—give pleasure to see. 'E think, 'I love 'er first—strangle after'—and go on looking. She 'old 'im fast and drag down 'is 'ead—all the time she know where 'e keep *navaja*. She cling and kiss—then nip out *navaja*, and *click!* 'E dead man." Enthusiasm burned in his black eyes, he stood cheering in his stirrups. "Señor Don Dios! that very fine! I give twenty dollars to see 'er make 'im love."

Manvers, for his part, grew the colder as his man waxed warm. He was clear, however, that he must find the girl and protect her from any trouble that might ensue. She had put herself within the law to save him from the knife; she must certainly be defended from the perils of the law.

From what he could learn of Spanish justice that

meant money and influence. These she should have; but there should be no more pastorals. Her kisses had been sweet, the aftertaste was sour in the mouth. Gil Pérez with his eloquence and dramatic fire had cured him of hankering after more of them. The girl was a rip, and there was an end of it.

He did not blame himself in the least for having kissed a rip—once. There was nothing in that. But he had kissed her twice—and the second kiss had given significance to the first. To think of it made him sore all over; it implied a tender relation, it made him seem the girl's lover. Why, it almost justified that sick-faced, grinning rascal, whose staring eyes had shocked him out of his senses. And what a damned fool he had made of himself with the crucifix! He ground his teeth together as he cursed himself for a sentimental idiot.

For the rest of the way it was Gil Pérez who cried up the quest—until he was curtly told by his master to talk about something else; and then Gil could have bitten his tongue off for saying a word too much.

A couple or days at the Escorial, with nothing of Manuela to interfere, served Manvers to recover his tone. Before he was in the capital he was again that good and happy traveler, to whom all things come well in their seasons, to whom the seasons of all things are the seasons at which they come. He liked the bustle and flaunt of Madrid, he liked its brazen front, its crowded *carreras*, and appetite for shows. There was hardly a day when the windows of the Puerta del Sol had not carpets on their balconies. Files of halberdiers went daily to and from the Palace and the Atocha, escorting some gilded, swinging coach; and every time the Madrileños serried and craned their heads. "*Viva Isabella!*" "*Abajo Don Carlos!*" or sometimes the other way about, the cries went up. Politics buzzed all about

the square in the morning; evening brimmed the *cafés*.

Manvers resumed his soul, became again the amused observer. Gil Pérez bided his time, and contented himself with being the perfect body-servant, which he undoubtedly was.

On the first Sunday after arrival, without any order, he laid before his master a ticket for the *corrida*, such a one as comported with his dignity; but not until he was sure of his ground did he presume to discuss the gory spectacle. Then, at dinner, he discovered that Manvers had been more interested in the spectators than the fray, and allowed himself free discourse. The Queen and the Court, the *alcalde* and the Prime Minister, the *manolos* and *manolas*—he had plenty to say, and to leave unsaid. He just glanced at the performers—impossible to omit the *espada*—Corchuelo, the first in Spain. But the fastidious in Manvers was awake and edgy. He had not liked the bull-fight; so Gil Pérez kept out of the arena. “I see one very grand old gentleman there, master,” was one of his chance casts. “You see ’im? ’E grandee of Espain, too much poor, proud all the same. Put ’is ’at on so soon the Queen come in—Don Luis Ramonez de Alavia.”

“Who’s he?” asked Manvers.

“Great gentleman of Valladolid,” said Gil Pérez. “Grandee of Espain—no money—only pride.” He did not add, as he might, that he had seen Manuela, or was pretty sure that he had. That was delicate ground.

But Manvers, who had forgotten all about her, went cheerfully his ways, and amused himself in his desultory fashion. After the close-pent streets of Segovia, where the wayfarer seems throttled by the houses, and one looks up for light and pants toward the stars and the air, he was pleased by the breath of

Madrid. The Puerta del Sol was magnificent—like a lake; the Alcalá and San Geronima were noble rivers, feeding it. He liked them at dawn when the hosepipe had been newly at work and these great spaces of emptiness lay gleaming in the mild sunlight, exhaling freshness like that of dewy lawns. When, under the glare of noon, they lay slumbrous, they were impressive by their prodigality of width and scope; in the bustle and hum of dusk, with the *cafés* filling, and spilling over on to the pavements, he could not tire of them; but at night, the mystery of their magic enthralled him. How could one sleep in such a city? The Puerta del Sol was then a sea of dark fringed with shores of bright light. The two huge feeders of it—with what argosies they teemed! Shrouded craft!

That touch of the East, which you can never miss in Spain, wherever you may be, was unmistakable in Madrid, in spite of Court and commerce, in spite of newspaper, of Stock Exchange, or *Cortes*. The cloaked figures moved silently, swiftly, seldom in pairs, without speech, with footfall scarcely audible. Now and again he heard the throb of a guitar, now and again, with sudden clamor, the clack of castanets. But such noises stopped on the instant, and the traffic was resumed—whatever it was—secret, swift, impenetrable business.

For the most part this traffic of the night was conducted by men—young or old, as may be. The *capa* hid them all, kept their semblance as secret as their affairs. Here and there, but rarely, walked a woman, superbly, as Spanish women will, with a self-sufficiency almost arrogantly strong, robed in white, hooded with a white veil. The mantilla came streaming from the comb, swathed her pale cheeks and enhanced her lustrous eyes; but from top to toe she was (whatever else she may have been, and it was not difficult to guess) in white.

Manvers watched them pass and repass; at a distance they looked like moths, but close at hand showed the carriage and intolerance of queens. They looked at him fairly as they passed, unashamed and unconcerned. Their eyes asked nothing from him, their lips wooed him not. There was none of the invitation such women extend elsewhere; far otherwise, it was the men who craved, the women who dispensed. When they listened, it was as to a petitioner on his knees, when they gave, it was like an alms. Imperious, free-moving, high-headed creatures, they interested him deeply.

It was true, as Gil Pérez was quick to see, that at his first bull-fight he had been unmoved by the actors, but stirred to the depths by the spectators; if he had cared to see another, it would have been to explore the secrets of this wonderful people, who could become animals without ceasing to be men and women. But why jostle on a bench, why endure the dust and glare of a *corrida* when you can see what Madrid can show you: the women by the Manzanares, or the nightly dramas of the streets?

Love in Spain, he began to learn, is a terrible thing; a grim tussle of wills, a matter of life and death, of meat and drink. He saw lovers, still as death, with upturned faces, tense and white, eating the iron of guarded balconies. Hour by hour they would stand there, waiting, watching, hoping on. No one interfered, no one remarked them. He heard a woman wail for her lover—wail and rock herself about, careless of who saw or heard her, and indeed neither seen nor heard. Once he saw a couple close together, vehement speech between them. A lovers' quarrel, terrible affair! The words seemed to scald. The man had had his say, and now it was her turn. He listened to her, touched but not persuaded—had his reasons, no doubt. But she! Manvers had not believed the heart

of a girl could hold such a gamut of emotions. She was young, slim, very pale; her face was as white as her robe. But her eyes were like burning lakes; and her voice, hoarse though she had made herself, had a cry in it as sharp as a violin's to cut the very soul of you. She spoke with her hands too, with her shoulders and bosom, with her head and stamping foot. She never faltered, though she ran from scorn of him to deep scorn of herself, and appealed in turn to his pride, his pity, his honor, and his lust. She had no reticence, set no bounds: she was everything or nothing; he was a god, or dirt of the kennel. In the end—and what a climax!—she stopped in the middle of a sentence, covered her eyes, sobbed, gave a broken cry, turned, and fled away.

The man, left alone, spread his arms out and lifted his face to the sky, as if appealing for the compassion of Heaven. Manvers could see by the light of the lamp which fell upon him that there were tears in his eyes. He was pitying himself deeply. "Señor Jesu, have pity!" he heard him saying. "What could I do? Woe upon me, what could I do?"

To him there, as he stood wavering, returned suddenly the girl. As swiftly as she had gone she came back, like a white squall. "Ah, son of a thief! Ah, son of a dog!" and she struck him down with a knife over the shoulder-blade. He gasped, groaned, and dropped; and she was upon his breast in a minute, moaning her pity and love. She stroked his face, crooned over him, lavished the loveliest vocables of her tongue upon his worthless carcass, and won him by the very excess of her passion. The fallen man turned in her arms, and met her lips with his.

Manvers shaking with excitement, left them. Here again was a Manuela! Manuela, her burnt

face on fire, her eyes blown fierce by rage, her tawny hair streaming in the wind; Manuela with a knife, hacking the life out of Esteban, came vividly before him. Ah, those soft lips of hers could bare the teeth; within an hour of his kissing her she must have bared them, when she snarled on that other. And her eyes which had peered into his, to see if liking were there—how had they gleamed upon the man she slew? Her sleekness then was that of the cat; but she had had no claws for him.

Why had she left him her crucifix? After all, had she murdered the fellow, or protected herself? She told the monk that she had been driven into a corner—to save Manvers and herself. Was he to believe that—or his own eyes? His eyes had just seen a Spanish girl with her lover, and his judgment was warped. Manuela might be of that sort—she had not been so to him. Nor could she ever be so, since there was no question of love between them now, and never could be.

“Come now,” thus he reasoned with himself, “Come now, let us be reasonable.” He had pulled her out of a scuffle and she had been grateful; she was pretty, he had kissed her. She was grateful, and had knifed a man who meant him mischief—and she had left him a crucifix.

Gratitude again. What had her gipsy skin and red kerchief to do with her heart? “Beware, my son, of the pathetic fallacy,” he told himself, and as he turned into the carrera San Geronimo, beheld Manuela robed in white pass along the street.

He knew her immediately, though her face had but flashed upon him, and there was not a stitch upon her to remind him of the ragged creature of the plain. A white mantilla covered her hair, a white gown hid her to the ankles. He had a glimpse of a white stocking, and remarked her high-heeled white slippers. Startling transformation! But

she walked like a free-moving creature of the open, and breasted the hot night as if she had been speeding through a woodland way. That was Manuela, who had killed a man to save him.

After a moment or so of hesitation he followed her, keeping his distance. She walked steadily up the *carrera*, looking neither to right nor to left. Many remarked her, some tried to stop her. A soldier followed her pertinaciously, till, presently she turned upon him in splendid rage and bade him be off.

Manvers praised her for that, and, quickening, gained upon her. She turned up a narrow street on the right. It was empty. Manvers, gaining rapidly, drew up level. They were now walking abreast, with only the street-way between them; but she kept a rigid profile to him—as severe, as proud and fine as the Arethusa's on a coin of Syracuse. The resemblance was striking; straight nose, short lip, rounded chin; the strong throat, unwinking eyes, looking straight before her; and adding to these beauties of contour her splendid coloring and carriage of a young goddess, it is not too much to say that Manvers was dazzled.

It is true; he was confounded by the excess of her beauty and by his knowledge of her condition. His experiences of life and cities could give him no parallel; but they could and did give him a dangerous sense of power. This glowing, salient creature was for him, if he would. One word, and she was at his feet.

For a moment, as he walked nearly abreast of her, he was ready to throw everything that was natural to him to the winds. She stirred a depth in him which he had known nothing of. He felt himself trembling all over—but while he hesitated a quick step behind caused him to look round. He saw a man following Manuela, and presently that it was Gil Pérez.

And Gil, with none of his own caution, walked on her side of the street and, overtaking her, took off his hat and accosted her by some name which caused her to turn like a beast at bay. Nothing abashed, Gil asked her a question which clapped a hand to her side and sent her cowering to the wall. She leaned panting there while he talked rapidly, explaining with suavity and point. It was very interesting to Manvers to watch these two together, to see, for instance, how Gil Pérez comported himself out of his master's presence; or how Manuela dealt with one of her own nation. They became strangers to him, people he had never known. He felt a foreigner indeed.

The greatest courtesy was observed, the most exact distance. Gil Pérez kept his hat in his hand, his body at a deferential angle. His weaving hands were never still. Manuela, her first act of royal rage ended, held herself superbly. Her eyes were half closed, her lips tightly so; and she so contrived as to get the effect of looking down upon him from a height. Manvers imagined that his name or person was being brought into play, for once Manuela looked at her companion and bowed her head gravely. Gil Pérez ran on with his explanations, and apparently convinced her judgment, for she seemed to consent to something which he asked of her; and presently walked on her way with a high head, while Gil Pérez, still holding his hat, and still explaining, walked with her, but a little way behind her.

A cooling experience. Manver strolled back to his hotel and his bed, with his unsuspected nature deeply hidden again out of sight. He wondered whether Gil Pérez would have anything to tell him in the morning, or whether, on the other hand, he would be discreetly silent as to the adventure. He wondered next where that adventure would end.

He had no reason to suppose his servant a man of refined sensibilities. Remembering his eloquence on the road to Madrid, the pæan he blew upon the fairness of Valencian women, he laughed. "Here's a muddy wash upon my blood-boltered pastoral," he said aloud. "Here's an end of my knight-errantry indeed!"

There was nearly an end of him—for almost at the same moment he was conscious of a light step behind him and of a sharp stinging pain and a blow in the back. He turned wildly round and struck out with his stick. A man, doubled in two, ran like a hare down the empty street and vanished into the dark. Manvers, feeling sick and faint, leaned to recover himself against a doorway, and probably fell; for when he came to himself he was in his bed in the hotel, with Gil Pérez and a grave gentleman in black standing beside him.

CHAPTER XIII

CHIVALRY OF GIL PEREZ

HE FELT stiff and stupid, with a roasting spot in his back between his shoulders; but he was able to see the light in Gil Pérez's eyes—which was a good light, saying, "Well so far—but I look for more." Neither Gil nor the spectacled gentleman in black—the surgeon, he presumed—spoke to him, and disinclined for speech himself, Manvers lay watching their tiptoe ministrations, with spells of comfortable dozing in between, in the course of which he again lost touch with the world of Spain.

When he came to once more he was much better, and felt hungry. He saw Gil Pérez by the window, reading a little book. The sun-blinds were down to darken the room; Gil held his book slantwise to

a chink and read diligently, moving his lips to pronounce the words.

"Gil Pérez," said Manvers, "what are you reading?" Gil jumped up at once. "You better, sir? Praised be God! I read," he said, "a little Catholic book which calls itself 'The Garden of the Soul'—ver' good little book. What you call ver' 'ealthy—ver' good for 'im. But you are better, master. You 'ungry—I get you a broth." Which he did, having it hot and hot in the next room.

"Now I tell you all the 'istory of this affair," he said. "Last night I seen Manuela out a-walking. I follow 'er too much—salute 'er—she lift 'er 'ead back to strike me dead. I say, 'Señorita, one word. Why you give your crucifix to my master—ha?' Sir, she began to shake—'ead shake, knee shake; I think she fall into 'erself. You see flowers in frost all estiff, stand up all right. By-'n-by the sun, 'e climb the sky—thosa flowers they fall esquash—all rotten insida. So Manuela fall into 'erself. Then I talk to 'er—she tell me all the 'istory of thata time. She kill Esteban Vincaz, she tell me—kill 'im quick just what I told you. Becausa why? Becausa she dicksure Esteban kill you. But I say to 'er, Manuela that was too bad, lady. Kill Esteban all the same. Ver' good for 'im, send 'im what you call kingdom—come like a shot. But you leava that crucifix on my master's plate—make him tender, too sorry for you. 'E think, thata nice girl, very. I like 'er too much. Now 'e 'as your crucifix in gold, lika piece of Vera Cruz, lika Santa Teresa's finger, and all the world know you kill Esteban Vincaz and 'e like you. Sir, I make 'er sorry—she begin to cry. I think"—and Gil Pérez walked to the window—"I think Manuela ver' fine girl—lika rose. Now, master"—and he returned to the bed—"I tell you something. That man who estab you las' night was Tormillo. You know who?"

Manvers shook his head. "Never heard of him, my friend. Who is he?"

"'E is servant to Don Luis Ramonez, the same I see at the *corrida*. I tell you about 'im—no money, all pride."

Manvers stared. "And will you have the goodness to tell me why Don Luis should want to have me stabbed?"

"I tell you, sir," said Gil Pérez. "Esteban Vincas was Don Bartolomé Ramonez, son to Don Luis. Bad son 'e was, if you like, sir. Wil' oats, what you call. All the sama nobleman, all the sama only son to Don Luis."

Manvers considered this oracle with what light he had. "Don Luis supposes that I killed his son, then," he said. "Is that it?"

"'E damsure," said Gil Pérez, blinking fast.

"On Manuela's account—eh?"

"Like a shot!" cried Gil Pérez with enthusiasm.

"So of course he thinks it is his duty to kill me in return."

"Of course 'e does, sir," said Gil. "I tell you, 'e is proud like the devil."

"I understand you," said Manvers. "But why does he hire a servant to do his revenges?"

"Because 'e think you dog," Gil replied calmly.

"'E not beara touch you with a poker."

Manvers laughed, and said, "We'll leave it at that. Now I want to know one more thing. How on earth did Don Luis find out that I was in the wood with Manuela and his son?"

"Ah," said Gil Pérez, "now you aska me something. Who knows?" He shrugged profusely. Then his face cleared. "Leave it to me, sir. I ask Tormillo." He was on his feet, as if about to find the assassin there and then.

"Stop a bit," said Manvers, "stop a bit, Gil

Now I must tell you that I also saw Manuela last night."

"Ah," said Gil Pérez softly; and his eyes glittered.

"I saw her in the street," Manvers continued, watching his servant. "She was all in white."

Gil Pérez blinked this fact. "Yes, sir," he said. "That is true. Poor girl!" His eyes clouded over. "Poor Manuela!" he was heard to say to himself.

"I followed her for a while," said Manvers, "and saw you catch her up, and stop her. Then I went away; and then that rascal struck me in the back. Now do you suppose that Don Luis means to serve Manuela the same way?"

Gil Pérez did not blink any more. "I think 'e wisha that," he said; "but I think 'e won't."

"Why not?"

"Because I tell Manuela what I see at the *corrida*. She was there too. She know it already. Bless you, she don't care."

"But *I* care," said Manvers sharply. "I've got her on my conscience. I don't intend her to suffer on my account."

"That," said Gil Pérez, "is what she wanta do." He looked piercingly at his master. "You know, sir, I ask 'er for your 'andkerchief."

"Well?" Manvers raised his eyebrows.

"I tell you whata she do. She look allaways in the dark. Nobody there. Then she open 'er gown—so"—and Gil held apart the bosom of his shirt. "I see it in there." There were tears in Gil's eyes. "Poor Manuela!" he murmured, as if that helped him. "I make 'er give it me. No good she keepa that in there."

"Where is it?" he was asked. He tried to be his jaunty self but failed.

"Not 'ere, sir. I 'ave it—I senda to the wash. Manvers looked keenly at him, but said nothing. He had a suspicion that Gil Pérez was telling a lie.

"You had better get her out of Madrid," he said after a while. "There may be trouble. Let her go and hide herself somewhere until this has blown over. Give me my pocket-book." He took a couple of bills out and handed them to Gil. "There's a hundred for her. Get her into some safe place—and the sooner the better. We'll see her through this business somehow."

Gil Pérez — very unlike himself — suddenly snatched at his hand and kissed it. Then he sprang to his feet again and tried to look as if he had never done such a thing. He went to the door and put his head out, listening. "Doctor coming," he said. "All righta leave you with 'im."

"Of course it's all right," said Manvers. But Gil shook his head.

"Don Luis make me sick," he said. "No use 'e come here."

"You mean that he might have another shot at me?"

Gil nodded; very wide-eyed and serious he was. "'E try. I know 'im too much." Manvers shut his eyes.

"I expect he'll have the decency to wait till I'm about again. Anyhow, I'll risk it. What you have to do is to get Manuela away."

"Yes, sir," said Gil in his best English, and admitted the surgeon with a bow. Then he went lightfooted out of the room and shut the door after him.

He was away two hours or more, and when he returned seemed perfectly happy.

"Manuela quite safa now," he told his master.

"Where is she, Gil?" he was asked, and waved his hand airily for reply.

"She all right, sir. Near 'ere. Quita safe. Presently I see 'er." He could not be brought nearer

than that. Questioned on other matters, he reported that he had failed to find either Don Luis or Tormillo, and was quite unable to say how they knew of his master's relations with the Valencian girl, or what their further intentions were. His chagrin at having been found wanting in any single task set him was a great delight to Manvers, and amused the slow hours of his convalescence.

His wound, which was deep but not dangerous, healed well and quickly. In ten days he was up again and inquiring for Manuela's whereabouts. Better not see her, he was advised, until it was perfectly certain that Don Luis was appeased. Gil promised that in a few days' time he would give an account of everything.

It is doubtful, however, whether he would have kept his word had not events been too many for him. One day after dinner he asked his master if he might speak to him. On receiving permission, he drew him apart into a little room, the door of which he locked.

"Hulloa, Gil Pérez," said Manvers, "what is your game now?"

"Sir," said Gil, holding his head up, and looking him full in the face. "I must espeak to you about Manuela. She is in the *Carcel de la Corte*—tomorrow they take 'er to the *Audiencia* about that assassination." He folded his arms and waited, watching the effects of his words.

Manvers was greatly perturbed. "Then you've made a mess of it," he said angrily. "You've made a mess of it."

"No mess," said Gil Pérez. "She tell me must go to jail. I say, all righta, lady."

"You had no business to say anything of the sort," Manvers said. "I am sorry I ever allowed you to interfere. I am very much annoyed with you, Pérez." He had never called him Pérez be-

fore—and that hurt Gil more than anything. His voice betrayed his feelings.

"You casta me off—call me Pérez, lika stranger! All right, sir—what you like," he stammered. "I tell you Manuela very fine girl—and why the devil I make 'er bad? No, sir, that imposs'. She too good for me. She say, Don Luis estab my saviour! Never never, for me! I show Don Luis what's whata, she say. I give myself up to justice; then 'e keepa quiet—say, That's all right. So she say to Paquita—that big girl who sleep with 'er when—when——" he was embarrassed. "Mostly always sleep with her," he explained.—"She say, 'Give me your veil, Paquita *de mi alma*.' Then she cover 'erself and say to me, 'Come, Gil Pérez.' I say, 'Señorita, where you will.' We go to the *Carcel de la Corte*. Three or four *alguaciles* in the court see 'er come in; saluta 'er 'Good day, señora—at the feet of your grace,' they say; for they think, 'ere comes a dam fine woman to see 'er lover.' She eshiver and lift 'erself. 'I am no señora,' she essay. 'Bad girl. Nama Manuela. I estab Don Bartolomé Ramonez de Alavia in the wood of La Huerca. You taka me—do what you like.' Sir, I say, that very fine thing. I would kissa the 'and of any girl who do that—same I kissa your 'and." His voice broke. "By God, I would!"

"What next?" said Manvers, moved himself.

"Sir," said Gil Pérez, "those *alguaciles* clacka the tongue. '*Soho, la Manola!*' say one, and lift 'er veil and look at 'er. All those others come and look too. They say she dam pretty woman. She standa there and look at them, lika they were dirt down in the street. Then I essay, 'Señores, you pleasa conduct this lady to the *carcelero* in two minutes, or you pay me, Gil Pérez, 'er servant. Thisa lady 'ave friends,' I say. 'Better for you, señores you fetcha *carcelero*.' They look at me sharp—and

they thinka so too. Then the *carcelero* 'e come, and I espeak with 'im and say, 'We 'ave too much money. Do what you like.'"

"And what did he do?" Manvers asked.

"He essay, 'Lady come with me.' So then we go away witha *carcelero*, and I eshow my fingers—so—to those *alguaciles* and say, 'Dam your eyes, you fellows, *vayan ustedes con Dios!*' Then the *carcelero* maka bow. 'E say to Manuela, 'Señora, you 'ave my little room. All by yourself. My wifa she maka bed—you first-class in there. Nothing to do withthemdogsdownthere. I give them what for lika shot,' say the *carcelero*. So I pay 'im well with your bills, sir, and see Manuela all the time every day."

He took rapid strides across the room—but stopped abruptly and looked at Manvers. There was fire in his eyes. "She lika saint, sir. I catch 'er on 'er knees before our Lady of Atocha. I 'ear 'er words all broken to bits. I see 'er estrike 'er breasts—Oh, God, that make me mad! She say, 'Oh, Lady, you with your sorrow and your love—you know me very well. Bad girl, too unfortunate, too miserable—your daughter all the sama, and your lover. Give me a great 'eart, Lady, that I may tell all the truth—all—all—all! If 'e thoughta well of me,' she say, crying like one o'clock, 'let 'im know me better. No good 'e think me fine woman—no good 'e kissa me'"—the delicacy with which Gil Pérez treated this part of the history, which Manvers had never told him, was a beautiful thing—" 'I wanta tell 'im all my 'istory. Then 'e say, pah, what a beast! and serva me right.' Sir, then she bow righta down to the grounda, she did, and covered 'er 'ead. I say, 'Manuela, I love you with alla my soul—but you do well, my 'eart.' And then she turn on me and tell me to go quick."

"So you are in love with her, Gil?" Manvers asked him. Gil admitted it.

"I love 'er the minute I see 'er at the *corrida*. My 'earta go alla water—but I know 'er. I say to myself, 'That is la Manuela of my master Don Osmundo. You be careful, Gil Pérez.'"

Manvers said, "Look here, Gil, I'm ashamed of myself. I kissed her, you know."

"Yes, sir," said Gil, and touched his forehead like a groom.

"If I had known that you—but I had no idea of it until this moment. I can only say——"

"Master," said Gil, "saya nothing at all. I love Manuela lika mad—that quite true; but she thinka me dirt on the pavement."

"Then she's very wrong," Manvers said.

"No, sir," said Gil, "thata true. All beautiful girls lika that. I understanda too much. But look 'ere—if she belong to me, that all the same, because I belong to you. You do what you like with 'er. I say, That all the same to me!"

"Gil Pérez," said Manvers, "you're a gentleman, and I'm very much ashamed of myself. But we must do what we can for Manuela. I shall give evidence, of course. I think I can make the judge understand."

Gil was inordinately grateful, but could not conceal his nervousness. "I think the *Juez*, 'e too much friend with Don Luis. I think 'e know what to do all the time before. Manuela 'ave too mucha trouble. Alla same she ver' fine girl, most beautiful, most unhappy. That do 'er good if she cry."

"I don't think she'll cry," Manvers said, and Gil Pérez snorted.

"She cry! By God, she never! She Espanish girl, too mucha proud, too mucha dicksure what she do with Don Bartolomé. She know she serve 'im right. Do againa all the time. What do you think 'e do with 'er when 'e 'ave 'er out there in Pobledo an' all those places? *Vaya!* I tell you,

sir. 'E want to live on 'er. 'E wanta make 'er too bad. Then she run lika devil. Sir, I tell you what she say to me other days. 'When I saw 'im come longside Don Osmundo,' she say, 'I look in 'is face an' I see Death. 'E grin at me—then I know why 'e come. 'E talk very nice—soft, lika gentleman—then I know what 'e want. I say, 'Son of a dog, never!' "

"Poor girl," said Manvers, greatly concerned.

"Thata quite true, sir," Gil Pérez agreed. "Very unfortunate fine girl. But you know what we say in Spain. Make yourself 'oney, we say, and the flies willa suck you. Manuela too much 'oney all the time. I know that, because she tell me everything, to tell you."

"Don't tell me," said Manvers.

"Bedam if I do," said Gil Pérez.

CHAPTER XIV

TRIAL BY QUESTION

THE court was not full when Manvers and his advocate, with Gil Pérez in attendance, took their places; but it filled up gradually, and the Judge of First Instance, when he took his seat upon the tribunal, faced a throng not unworthy of a bullfight. Bestial, leering, inflamed faces, peering eyes agog for mischief, all the nervous expectation of the sudden, the bloody, or terrible were there.

There was the same dead hush when Manuela was brought in as when they throw open the doors of the *toril*, and the throng holds its breath. Gil Pérez drew his with a long whistling sound, and Manvers, who could dare to look at her, thought he had never seen maidenly dignity more beautifully

shown. She moved to her place with a gentle consciousness of what was due to herself very touching to see.

The crowded court thrilled and murmured, but she did not raise her eyes; once only did she show her feeling, and that was when she passed near the barrier where the spectators could have touched her by leaning over. More than one stretched his hand out, one at least his walking cane. Then she took hold of her skirt and held it back, just as a girl does when she passes wet paint. This little touch, which made the young men jeer and whisper obscenity, brought the water to Manvers's eyes. He heard Gil Pérez draw again his whistling breath and felt him tremble. Directly Manuela was in her place, standing, facing the assize, Gil Pérez looked at her, and never took his eyes from her again. She was dressed in black, and her hair was smooth over her ears, knotted neatly on the nape of her neck. The Judge, a fatigued, monumental person with a long face, pointed whiskers, and the eyes of a dead fish, told her to stand up. As she was already standing, she looked at him with patient inquiry; but he took no notice of that. Her self-possession was indeed remarkable. She gave her answers quietly, without hesitation, and when anything was asked her which offended her, either ignored it or told the questioner what she thought of it. From the outset Manvers could see that the Judge's business was to incriminate her beyond repair. Her plea of guilty was not to help her. She was to be shown infamous.

The examination ran thus:

Judge: You are Manuela, daughter of Incarnación Presa of Valencia, and have never known your father? (Manuela bows her head.) Answer the Court.

Manuela: It is true.

Judge: It is said that your father was the *gitano* Sagruel.

Manuel: I don't know.

Judge: You may well say that. Remember that you are condemning your mother by such answers. Your mother sold you at twelve years old to an unfrocked priest named Tormes.

Manuela: Yes. For three *pesos*.

Judge: Disgraceful transaction! This wretch taught you dancing, posturing, and all manner of wickedness?

Manuela: He taught me to dance.

Judge: How long were you in his company?

Manuela: For three years.

Judge: He took you from fair to fair; you were a public dancer?

Manuela: That is true.

Judge: I can imagine—the court can imagine—your course of life during this time. This master of yours, this Tormes, how did he treat you?

Manuela: Very ill.

Judge: Be more explicit, Manuela. In what way?

Manuela: He beat me. He hurt me.

Judge: Why so?

Manuela: I cannot tell you any more about him.

Judge: You refuse?

Manuela: Yes.

Judge: The court places its interpretation upon your silence. (He looked painfully round as if he regretted the absence of the proper means of extracting answers. Manvers heard Gil Pérez curse him under his breath.)

The Judge made lengthy notes upon the margin of his docket, and then proceeded.

Judge: The young gentleman, Don Bartolomé Ramonez, first saw you at the fair of Salamanca in 1859?

Manuela: Yes.

Judge: He saw you often, and followed you to Valladolid, where his father Don Luis lived?

Manuela: Yes.

Judge: He professed his passion for you, gave you presents?

Manuela: Yes.

Judge: You persuaded him to take you away from Tormes?

Manuela: No.

Judge: What do I hear?

Manuela: I said no. It was because he said that he loved me that I went with him. He wished to marry me, he said.

Judge: What! Don Bartolomé Ramonez marry a public dancer! Be careful what you say there, Manuela.

Manuela: He told me so, and I believed him.

Judge: I pass on. You were with him until the April of this year—you were with him two years.

Manuela: Yes.

Judge: And then you found another lover, and deserted him?

Manuela: No. I ran away from him by myself.

Judge: But you found another lover.

Manuela: No.

Judge: Be careful, Manuela. You will trip in a moment. You ran away from Don Bartolomé when you were at Pobledo, and you went to Palencia. What did you do there?

Manuela: I cannot answer you.

Judge: You mean that you will not.

Manuela: I mean that I cannot.

Judge: This is wilful prevarication again. I have the authority to compel you.

Manuela: You have none.

Judge: We shall see, Manuela, we shall see.

You left Palencia on the 12th of May in the company of an Englishman?

Manuela: Yes.

Judge: He is here in court.

Manuela: Yes.

Judge: Do you see him at this moment?

Manuela: Yes. (But she did not turn her head to look at Manvers until the Judge forced her.)

Judge: I am not he. I am not likely to have taken you from Palencia and your proceedings there. Look at the Englishman. (She hesitated for a little while, and then turned her eyes upon him with such gentle modesty that Manvers felt nearer to loving her than he had ever done. He rose slightly in his seat and bowed to her: she returned the salute like a young queen. The Judge had gained nothing by that.) I see that you treat each other with ceremony; there may be reasons for that. We shall soon see. This gentleman then took you away from Palencia in the direction of Valladolid, and made you certain proposals. What were they?

Manuela: He proposed that I should return to Palencia.

Judge: And you refused?

Manuela: Yes.

Judge: Why?

Manuela: I could not go back to Palencia.

Judge: Why?

Manuela: There were many reasons. One was that I was afraid of seeing Esteban there.

Judge: You mean Don Bartolomé Ramonez de Alavia? (She nodded.) Answer me.

Manuela: Yes, yes.

Judge: You are impatient because your evil deeds are coming to light. I am not surprised; but you must command yourself. There is more to come. (Manvers who was furious, asked his advocate whether something could not be done. Directly her

fear of Esteban was touched upon, he said, the Judge changed his tactics. The advocate smiled. "Be patient, sir," he said. "The Judge has been instructed beforehand." "You mean," said Manvers, "that he has been bribed." "I did not say so," the advocate replied.)

The Judge returned to Palencia. "What other reasons had you?" was his next question but Manuela was clever enough to see where her strength lay. "My fear of Esteban swallowed all other reasons." She saved herself, and with unconcealed chagrin the Judge went on toward the real point.

Judge: The Englishman then made you another proposal?

Manuela: Yes, sir. He proposed to take me to a convent.

Judge: You refused that?

Manuela: No, sir. I should have been glad to go to a convent.

Judge: You, however, accepted his third proposal, namely, that you should be under his protection?

Manuela: I was thankful for his protection when I saw Esteban coming.

Judge: I have no doubt of that. You had reason to fear Don Bartolomé's resentment?

Manuela: I knew that Esteban intended to murder me.

Judge: Don Bartolomé overtook you. You were riding before the Englishman on his horse?

Manuela: Yes. I could not walk. I was ill.

Judge: Don Bartolomé remained with you until the Englishman ran away?

Manuela: He did not run away. Why should he? He went away on his own affairs.

Judge: (After looking at his papers): I see. The Englishman went away after the pair of you had killed Don Bartolomé.

Manuela: That is not true. He went away to bathe, and then I killed Esteban with his own knife. I killed him because he told me that he intended to murder me and the English gentleman who had been kind to me. I confess it—I confessed it to the *alguaciles* and the *carcelero*. You may twist what I say as you will, to please your friends, but the truth is in what I say.

Judge: Silence. It is for you to answer the question which I put to you. You forget yourself, Manuela. But I will take your confession as true for the moment. Supposing it to be true, did you not stab Don Bartolomé in the neck in order that you might be free?

Manuela: I killed him to defend myself and an innocent person. I have told you so

Judge: Why should Don Bartolome wish to kill you?

Manuela: He hated me because I had refused to do his pleasure. He wished to make me bad——

Judge: (Lifting his hands and throwing his head up) Bad! Was he not jealous of the Englishman?

Manuela: I don't know.

Judge: Did he not tell you that the Englishman was your lover? Did you not say so to Fray Juan de la Cruz?

Manuela: He spoke falsely. It was not true. He may have believed it.

Judge: We shall see. Have patience, Manuela. Having slain your old lover, you were careful to leave a token for his successor. You left more than that: your crucifix from your neck, and a message with Fray Juan.

Manuela: Yes. I told Fray Juan the whole of the truth, and begged him to tell the gentleman, because I wished him to think well of me. I told him that Esteban——

Judge: Softly, softly, Manuela. Why did you leave your crucifix behind you?

Manuela: Because I was grateful to the gentleman who had saved my life at Palencia; because I had nothing else to give him. Had I had anything more valuable I would have left it. Nobody had been kind to me before.

Judge: You know what he has done with your crucifix, Manuela?

Manuela: I do not.

Judge: What are you saying?

Manuela: The truth.

Judge: I have the means of confuting you. You told Fray Juan that you were going to Madrid.

Manuela: I did not.

Judge: In the hope that he would tell the Englishman.

Manuela: If he told the gentleman that he lied.

Judge: It is then a singular coincidence which led to your meeting him here in Madrid?

Manuela: I did not meet him.

Judge: Did you not meet him a few nights before you surrendered to justice?

Manuela: No.

Judge: Did you meet his servant?

Manuela: I cannot tell you.

Judge: Did not the Englishman pay for your lodging in the *Carcel de la Corte*? Did he not send his servant every day to see you?

Manuela: The gentleman was lying wounded at the hotel. He had been stabbed in the street.

Judge: We are not discussing the Englishman's private affairs. Answer my questions.

Manuela: I cannot answer them.

Judge: You mean that you will not, Manuela. Did you not know that the Englishman caused your crucifix to be set in gold, like a holy relic?

Manuela: I did not know it.

Judge: We have it on your own confession that you slew Don Bartolomé Ramonez in the wood of La Huerca, and you admit that the Englishman was protecting you before that dreadful deed was done, that he has since paid for your treatment in prison, and that he has treasured your crucifix like a sacred relic.

Manuela: You are pleased to say these things. I don't say them. You wish to incriminate a person who has been kind to me.

Judge: I will ask you one more question, Manuela. Why did you give yourself up to justice?

Manuela: (After a painful pause, speaking with high fervor and some approach to dramatic effect). I will answer you, *Señor Juez*. It was because I knew that Don Luis would contrive the death of Don Osmundo if I did not prove him innocent.

Judge (Rising, very angry): Silence! The court cannot entertain your views of persons not concerned in your crime.

Manuela: But—(she shrugged and looked away).

Judge: You can sit down.

CHAPTER XV

NEMESIS—DON LUIS

MANVERS'S reiterated question of how in the name of wonder Don Luis or anybody else knew what he had done with Manuela's crucifix was answered before the day was over; but not by Gil Pérez or the advocate whom he had engaged to defend the unhappy girl.

This personage gave him to understand without disguise that there was very little chance for Manuela. The Judge, he said, had been "instructed."

He clung to that phrase. When Manvers said, "Let us instruct him a little," he took snuff and replied that he feared previous "instruction" might have created a prejudice. He undertook, however, to see him privately before judgment was delivered, but intimated that he must have a very free hand.

Manvers's rejoinder took the shape of a blank cheque with his signature upon it. The advocate, fanning himself with it in an abstracted manner, went on to advise the greatest candor in the witness-box. "Beware of irritation, dear sir," he said. "The Judge will plant a banderilla here and there, you may be sure. That is his method. You learn more from an angry man than a cool one. For my own part," he went on, "you know how we stand—without witnesses. I shall do what I can, you may be sure."

"I hope you will get something useful from the prisoner," Manvers said. "A little of Master Esteban's private history should be useful."

"It would be perfectly useless, if you will allow me to say so," replied the advocate. "The Judge will not hear a word against a family like the Ramonez. So noble and so poor! Perhaps you are not aware that the Archbishop of Toledo is Don Luis's first cousin? That is so."

"But is that allowed to justify his rip of a son in goading a girl on to murder?" cried Manvers.

The advocate again took snuff, shrugging as he tapped his fingers on the box. "The Ramonez say, you see, sir, that Don Bartolomé may have threatened her, moved by jealousy. Jealousy is a well-understood passion here. The plea is valid and good."

"Might it not stand for Manuela too?" he was asked.

"I don't think we had better advance it, Don Osmundo," he said, after a significant pause.

Gil Pérez, pale and all on edge, had been walking the room like a caged wolf. He swore to himself—but in English, out of politeness to his master. “Thata dam thief! Ah, *Juez* of my soul, if I see you twist in ’ell is good for me.” Presently he took Manvers aside and, his eyes full of tears, asked him, “Sir, you escusa Manuela, if you please. She maka story ver’ bad to ’ear. She no like—I see ’er red as fire, burn like the devil, sir. She ver’ unfortunata girl—too beautiful to live. And all these ’ogs—O my God, what can she do?” He opened his arms, and turned his pinched face to the sky. “What can she do, O my God?” he cried. “So beautiful as a rose, an’ so poor, an’ so a child! You sorry, sir, ’ey?” he asked, and Manvers said he was more sorry than he could say.

That comforted him. He kissed his master’s hand, and then told him that Manuela was glad that he knew all about her. “She dam glad, sir, that I know. She say to me las’ night—‘What I shall tell the *Juez* will be the very truth. Señor Don Os-mundo shall know what I am,’ she say. ‘To ’im I could never say it. To thata *Juez* too easy say it. To-morrow,’ she say, ‘e know me for what I am—too bad girl.’”

“I think she’s a noble girl,” said Manvers. “She’s got more courage in her little finger than I have in my body. She’s a girl in a thousand.”

Gil Pérez glowed, and lifted up his beaten head. “Esplendid—eh?” he cried out. “By God, I serve ’er on my knees.”

On returning to the court, the beard and patient face of Fray Juan greeted our friend. He had very little to testify, save that he was sure the Englishman had known nothing of the crime. The prisoner had told him her story without haste or passion. He had been struck by that. She said that she killed Don Bartolomé in a hurry lest he should kill

both her and her benefactor. She had not informed him, nor had he reported to the gentleman, that she was going to Madrid. The Englishman said that he intended to find her, and witness had strongly advised him against it. He had told him that his motives would be misunderstood. "As, in fact, they have been, brother?" the advocate suggested. Fray Juan raised his eyebrows, and sighed. "*Quién sabe?*" was his answer.

Manvers then stood up and spoke his testimony. He gave the facts as the reader knows them, and made it clear that Manuela was in terror of Esteban from the moment he appeared, and even before he appeared. He had noticed that she frequently glanced behind them as they rode, and had asked her the reason. Her fear of him in the wood was manifest, and he blamed himself greatly for leaving her alone with the young man.

"I was new to the country, you must understand," he said. "I could see that there was some previous acquaintance between those two, but could not guess that it was so serious. I thought, however, that they had made up their differences and gone off together when I returned from bathing. When Fray Juan showed me the body and told me what had been done, I was very much shocked. It had been, in one sense, my fault, for if I had not rescued her, Esteban would not have suspected me, or intended my death. That I saw at once; and my desire of meeting Manuela again was that I might defend her from the consequences of an act which I had, in that one sense, brought about—to which she had at any rate been driven on my account."

"I will ask you, sir," said the Judge, "one question upon that. Was that also your motive in having the crucifix set in pure gold?"

"No," said Manvers, "not altogether. I doubt if I can explain that to you."

"I am of that opinion myself," said the Judge with an elaborate bow. "But the court will be interested to hear you."

The court was.

"This girl," Manvers said, "was plainly most unfortunate. She was ragged, poorly fed, had been ill used, and was being shamefully handled when I first saw her. I snatched her out of the hands of the wretches who would have torn her to pieces if I had not interfered. From beginning to end I never saw more shocking treatment of a woman than I saw at Palencia. Not to have interfered would have shamed me for life. What then? I rescued her, as I say, and she showed herself grateful in a variety of ways. Then Esteban Vincas came up and chose to treat me as her lover. I believe he knew better, and think that my horse and haversack had more to do with it. Well, I left Manuela with him in the wood—hardly, I may suggest, the act of a lover—and never saw Esteban alive again. But I believed Manuela's story absolutely; I am certain she would not lie at such a time, or to such a man as Fray Juan. The facts were extraordinary, and her crime, done as it was in defence of myself, was heroic—or I thought so. Her leaving of the crucifix was, to me, a proof of her honest intention. I valued the gift, partly for the sake of the giver, partly for the act which it commemorated. She had received a small service from me, and had returned it fifty-fold by an act of desperate courage. To crown her charity she left me all that she had in the world. I do not wonder myself at what I did. I took the crucifix to a jeweler at Valladolid, had it set as I thought it deserved—and I see now that I did her there a cruel wrong."

"Permit me to say, sir," said the triumphant Judge, "that you also did Don Luis Ramonez a great service. Through your act, however in-

tended, he has been enabled to bring a criminal to justice."

"I beg pardon," said Manvers, "she brought herself to justice—so soon as Don Luis Ramonez sent his assassin out to stab me in the back, and in the dark. And this again was a proof of her heroism, since she thought by these means to satisfy his craving for human blood."

Manvers spoke incisively and with severity. The court thrilled, and the murmuring was on his side. The Judge was much disturbed. Manuela alone maintained her calm, sitting like a pensive Hebe, her cheek upon her hand.

The Judge's annoyance was extreme. It tempted him to wrangle.

"I beg you, sir, to restrain yourself. The court cannot listen to extraneous matter. It is concerned with the consideration of a serious crime. The illustrious gentleman of your reference mourns the loss of his only son."

"I fail," said Manvers, "to see how my violent death can assuage his grief." The Judge was not the only person in court to raise his eyebrows; if Manvers had not been angry he would have seen the whole assembly in the same act, and been certified that they were not with him now. His advocate whispered him urgently to sit down. He did, still mystified. The Judge immediately retired to consider his judgment.

Manvers's advocate left the court and was away for an hour. He returned very sedately to his place, with the plainly expressed intention of saying nothing. The court buzzed with talk, much of it directed at the beautiful prisoner, whose person, bearing, motives, and fate were freely discussed. Oddly enough, at that moment half the men in the hall were ready to protect her.

Manvers felt his heart beating, but could neither

think nor speak coherently. If Manuela were to be condemned to death, what was he to do? He knew not at all—but the crisis to which his own affairs and his own life were now brought turned him cold. He dared not look at Gil Pérez. The minutes dragged on.

The Judge entered the court and sat in his chair. He looked very much like a codfish—with his gaping mouth and foolish eyes. He pulled one of his long whiskers and inspected the end of it; detected a split hair, separated it from its happier fellows, shut his eyes, gave a vicious wrench to it and gasped as it parted. Then he stared at the assembly before him, as if to catch them laughing, frowned at Manvers who sat before him with folded arms; lastly he turned to the prisoner, who stood up and looked him in the face.

"Manuela," he said, "you stand condemned upon your own confession of murder in the first degree—murder of a gentleman who had been your benefactor, of whose life and protection you desired, for reasons of your own, to be rid. The court is clear that you are guilty and cannot give you any assurance that your surrender to justice has assisted the ministers of justice. Those diligent guardians would have found you sooner or later, you may be sure. If any one is to be thanked it is perhaps the foreign gentleman, whose candor"—and here he had the assurance to make Manvers a bow—"whose candor, I say, has favorably impressed the court. But, nevertheless, the court, in its clemency, is willing to allow you the merits of your intention. It is true that justice would have been done without your confession; but it may be allowed that you desired to stand well with the laws, after having violated them in an outrageous manner. It is this desire of yours which inclines the court to mercy. I shall not inflict the last penalty upon you, nor exact the

uttermost farthing which your crime deserves. The court is willing to believe that you are penitent, and condemns you to perpetual seclusion in the Institution of the Recogidas de Santa María Magdalena."

Manuela was seen to close her eyes; but she collected herself directly. She looked once, piercingly, at Manvers, then surrendered herself to him who touched her on the shoulder, turned and went out of the court.

Everybody was against her now; they jeered, howled, hissed, and cursed her. A spoiled plaything had got its deserts. Manvers turned upon them in a white fury. "Dogs," he cried, "will nothing shame you!" but nobody seemed to hear or heed him at the moment, and Gil Pérez whispered in his ear, "That no good, master. This *canalla* all the same swine. You come with me, sir, I tell you dam good thing." He had recovered his old jauntiness, and swaggered before his master, clearing the way with oaths and threatenings.

Manvers followed him in a very stern mood. By the door he felt a touch on the arm, and, turning, saw a tall elderly gentleman cloaked in black. He recognized him at once by his hollow eye-sockets and smouldering, deeply set eyes. "You will remember me, señor caballero, in the shop of Sebastian the goldsmith," he said; and Manvers admitted it. He received another bow, and the reminder. "We met again, I think, in the Church of Las Angustias in Valladolid."

"Yes, indeed," Manvers said, "I remember you very well."

"Then you remember, no doubt, saying to me with regard to your crucifix, which I had seen in Sebastian's hands, then in your own, that it was a piece of extravagance on your part. You will not withdraw that statement to-day, I suppose."

That which lay latent in his words was betrayed by the gleam of cold fire in his eyes. Manvers colored. "You have this advantage of me, señor," he said, "that you know to whom you are speaking, and I do not."

"It is very true, señor Don Osmundo," the gentleman said severely. "I will enlighten you. I am Don Luis Ramonez de Alavia, at your service."

Manvers turned white. He had indeed made Manuela pay double. So much for sentiment in Spain.

CHAPTER XVI

THE HERALD

A CARD of ample size and flourished characters bearing the name of El Marqués de Fuenterrabia, was brought up by Gil Pérez.

"Who is he?" Manvers inquired; and Gil waved his hand.

"This olda gentleman," he explained, "'e come Embassador from Don Luis. 'E say, 'What you do next, señor Don Osmundo?' You tell 'im, sir—is my advice."

"But I don't know what I am going to do," said Manvers irritably. "How the deuce should I know?"

"You tell 'im that, sir," Gil said softly. "Thata best of all."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, sir, then 'e tell you what Don Luis, 'e do."

"Show him in," said Manvers.

The Marqués de Fuenterrabia was a white-whiskered, irascible personage, of stately manners and slight stature. He wore a blue frock-coat and

nankeen trousers over riding-boots. His face was one uniform pink, his eyes small, fierce, and blue. They appeared to emit heat as well as light; for it was a frequent trick of their proprietor's to snatch at his spectacles and wipe the mist from them with a bandana handkerchief. Unglazed, his eyes showed a blank and indiscriminate ferocity which Manvers found exceedingly comical.

They bowed to each other—the Marqués with ceremonious cordiality, Manvers with the stiffness of an Englishman to an unknown visitor. Gil Pérez hovered in the background, as it were, on the tips of his toes.

The Marqués, having made his bow, said nothing. His whole attitude seemed to imply, "Well, what next?"

Manvers said that he was at his service; and then the Marqués explained himself.

"My friend, Don Luis Ramonez de Alavia," he said, "has entrusted me with his confidence. It appears that a series of occurrences, involving his happiness, honor, and dignity at once, can be traced to your Excellency's intromission in his affairs. I take it that your Excellency does not deny——"

"Pardon me," Manvers, said, "I deny it absolutely."

The Marqués was very much annoyed... "*Que! Que!*" he muttered and snatched off his spectacles. Glaring ferociously at them, he wiped them with his bandana.

"If Don Luis really imagines that I compassed the death of his son," said Manvers, "I suppose he has legal remedy. He had better have me arrested and have done with it."

The Marqués, his spectacles on, gazed at the speaker with astonishment. "Is it possible, sir, that you can so misconceive the mind of a gentleman as to suggest legal process in an affair of the kind?"

Whatever my friend Don Luis may consider you, he could not be guilty of such a discourtesy. One may think he is going too far in the other direction, indeed—though one is debarred from saying so under the circumstances. But I am not here to bandy words with you. My friend Don Luis commissions me to ask your Excellency for the name of a friend, to whom the arrangements may be referred for ending a painful controversy in the usual manner. If you will be so good as to oblige me, I need not intrude upon you again."

"Do you mean to suggest, señor Marqués," said Manvers, after a pause, "that I am to meet Don Luis on the field?"

"Pardon?" said the Marqués, in such a way as to answer the question.

"My dear sir," he was assured, "I would just as soon fight my grandfather. The thing is preposterous." The Marqués gasped for air, but Manvers continued. "Had your friend's age been anywhere near my own, I doubt if I could have gratified him after what took place the other day. He caused a man of his to stab me in the back as I was walking down a dark street. In my country we call that a dastard's act." The Marqués started, and winced as if he was hurt; but he remembered himself and the laws of warfare, and when he spoke it was within the extremes of politeness.

"I confess, sir," he said, "that I was not prepared for your refusal. It puts me in a delicate position, and to a certain extent I must involve my friend also. It is my duty to declare to you that it is Don Luis's intention to break the laws of Spain. An outrage has been committed against his house and blood which one thing only can efface. Moved by extreme courtesy, Don Luis was prepared to take the remedy of gentlemen; but, since you have refused him that, he is driven to the use of natural

law. It will be in your power—I cannot deny—to deprive him of that also; but he is persuaded that you will not take advantage of it. Should you show any signs of doing so, I am to say, Don Luis will be forced to consider you outside the pale of civilization, and to treat you without any kind of toleration. To suggest such a possibility is painful to me, and I beg your pardon very truly for it.” In truth the Marqués looked ashamed of himself.

Manvers considered the very oblique oration to which he had listened. “I hope I understand you, señor Marqués,” he said. “You intend to say that Don Luis means to have my life by all means?”

The Marqués bowed. “That is so, señor Don Osmundo.”

“But you suggest that it is possible that I might stop him by informing the authorities?”

“No, no,” said the Marqués hastily, “I did not suggest that. The authorities would never interfere. The British Embassy might perhaps be persuaded—but you will do me the justice to admit that I apologize for the suggestion.”

“Oh, by all means,” said Manvers. “You thought pretty badly of me—but not so badly as all that.”

“Quite so,” said the Marqués; and then the surprising Gil Pérez descended from mid-air, and bowed to the stranger.

“My master, Don Osmundo, señor Marqués, is incapable of such conduct,” said he—and looked to Manvers for approval.

He struggled with himself, but failed. His guffaw must out, and exploded with violent effect. It drove the Marqués back to the door and sent Gil Pérez scudding on tiptoe to the window.

“You are magnificent, all of you!” cried Manvers. “You flatter me into connivance. Let me state the case exactly. Don Luis is to stab or shoot

me at sight, and I am to give him a free hand. Is that what you mean? Admirable. But let me ask you one question. Am I not supposed to protect myself?"

The Marqués stared. "I don't think I perfectly understand you, Don Osmundo. Reprisals are naturally open to you. We declare war, that is all."

"Oh," said Manvers. "You declare war? Then I may go shooting too?"

"Naturally," said the Marqués. "That is understood."

"No dam fear about that," said Gil Pérez to his master.

CHAPTER XVII

LA RECOGIDA

SISTER CHUCHA, the nun who took first charge of newcomers to the Penitentiary, was fat and kindly, and not very discreet. It was her business to measure Manuela for a garb and to see to the cutting of her hair. She told the girl that she was by far the most handsome penitent she had ever had under her hands.

"It is a thousand pities to cut all this beauty away," she said; "for it is obvious you will want it before long. So far as that goes you will find the cap not unbecoming; and I'll see to it that you have a piece of looking-glass—though, by ordinary, that is forbidden. Good gracious, child, what a figure you have! If I had one quarter of your good fortune I should never have been religious."

She went on to describe the rules of the institution, the hours and nature of the work, the offices in Chapel, the recreation times and hours for meals.

Manuela, she said, was not the build for rope and mat work.

"I shall get Reverend Mother to put you to housework, I think," she said. "That will give you exercise, and the chance of an occasional peep at the window. You don't deserve it, I fancy; but you are so handsome that I have a weakness for you. All you have to do is to speak fairly to Father Vicente and curtsey to the Reverend Mother whenever you see her. Above all no tantrums. Leave the others alone, and they'll let you alone. There's not one of them but has her scheme for getting away, or her friend outside. That's occupation enough for her. It will be the same with you. Your friends will find you out. You'll have a *novio* spending the night in the street before to-morrow's over, unless I'm very much mistaken." She patted her cheek. "I'll do what I can for you, my dear."

Manuela curtseyed, and thanked the good nun. "All I have to do," she said, "is to repent of my sin—which has become very horrible to me."

"La-la-la!" cried Sister Chucha. "Keep that for Father Vicente, if you please, my dear. That is his affair. Our patroness led a jolly life before she was a saint. No doubt, you should not have stabbed Don Bartolomé, and of course the Ramonez would never overlook such a thing. But we all understand that you must save your own skin if you could—that's very reasonable. And I hear that there was another reason." Here she chucked her chin. "I don't wonder at it," she said with a meaning smile.

The girl colored and hung her head. She was still quivering with the shame of her public torture. She could still see Manvers's eyes stare chilly at the wall before them, and believe them to grow colder with each stave of her admissions. Her one conso-

lation lay in the thought that she could please him by amendment and save him by conviction; so it was hard to be petted by Sister Chucha. She would have welcomed the whip, would have hugged it to her bosom—the rod of Salvation, she would have called it; but compliments on her beauty, caresses of cheek and chin—was she not to be allowed to be good? As for escape, she had no desire for that. She could love her Don Osmundo best from a distance. What was to be gained, but shame, by seeing him?

Her shining hair was cut off; the cap, the straight prison garb were put on. She stood up, slim-necked, an arrowy maid with her burning face and sea-green eyes chastened by real humility. She made a good confession to Father Vicente, and took her place among her mates.

It was true, what Sister Chucha had told her. Every penitent in that great and gaunt building was thrilled with one persistent hope, worked patiently with that in view, and under its spell refrained from violence or clamor. There was not one face of those files of gray-gowned girls which at stated hours, entered the chapel, knelt at the altar, or stooped at painful labor through the stifling days, which did not show a gleam. Stupid, vacant, vicious, morose, pretty, sparkling, whatever the face might be, there was that expectation to redeem or enhance it, to make it human, to make it womanish. There was, or there would be, some day, any day, a lover outside—to whom it would be the face of all faces.

Manuela had not been two hours in the company of her fellow-prisoners before she was told that there were two ways of escape from the Recogidas. Religion or marriage these were; but the religious alternative was not discussed.

Sister Chucha, it transpired, had chosen that way

—"But do you wonder?" cried the girl who told Manuela, with shrill scorn—most of the sisters had once been penitents—"Vaya! Look at them, my dear!" cried this young Amazon, conscious of her own charms.

She was a plump Andalusian, black-eyed, merry, and quick to change her moods. Love had sent her to Saint Mary Magdalene, and love would take her out again.

That Chucha, she owned, was a kind soul. She always put pretty ones to housework—"it gives us a chance at the windows. I have Fernando who works at the sand-carting in the river. He never fails to look up this way. Some day he will ask for me." She peered at herself in a pail of water, and fingered her cap daintily. "How does my skirt hang now, Manuela? Too short, I fancy. Did you ever see such shoes as they give you here! Lucky that nobody can see you."

This was the strain of everybody's talk in the house of Las Recogidas—in the whitewashed galleries where they walked in squads under the eye of a nun who sat reading a good book against the wall, in the court, where they lay in the shade to rest, prone with their faces hidden in their arms, or with knees huddled up and eyes fixed in a stare. They talked to each other in the hoarse, tearful staccato of Spain, which, beginning low, seems to gather force and volume as it runs until, like a beck in flood, it carries speaker and listener over the bar into tossing waves of yeasty water.

Manuela, through all, kept her thoughts to herself, and spoke nothing of her own affairs. There may have been others like her, fixed to the great achievement of justifying themselves to their own standard: she had no means of knowing. Her standard was this, that she had purged herself by open confession to the man whom she loved. She

was clean, sweetened, and full of heart. All she had to do was to open wide her house that holiness might enter in.

Besides this she had, at the moment, the consciousness of a good action; for she firmly believed that by her surrender to the law she had again saved Manvers from assassination. If Don Luis could only cleanse his honor by blood, he now had her heart's blood. That should suffice him. She grew happier as the days went on.

Meanwhile it was remarked upon by Mercedes and Dolores and a half dozen more that distinguished strangers came to the gallery of the chapel. The outlines of them could be described through the *grille*; for behind the *grille* was a great white window which threw them into high relief.

It was the fixed opinion of Mercedes and Dolores than Manuela had a *novio*.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE NOVIO

IT IS true that Manvers had gone to the Chapel of the Recogidas to look for, or to look at, Manuela. This formed the one amusing episode in his week's round in Madrid, where otherwise he was extremely bored, and where he only remained to give Don Luis a chance of waging his war.

To be shot at in the street, or stabbed in the back as you are homing through the dusk are, to be sure, not everybody's amusements, and in an ordinary way they were not those of Mr. Manvers. But he found that his life gained a zest by being threatened with deprivation, and so long as that zest lasted he was willing to oblige Don Luis. The weather was insufferably hot, one could only be abroad early

in the morning or late at night—both the perfection of seasons for the assassin's game.

Yet nothing very serious had occurred during the week following the declaration of war. Gil Pérez could not find Tormillo, and had to declare his suspicions of a Manchegan teamster, who had jostled his master in the Puerta del Sol and made as if to draw his knife, were without foundation. What satisfied him was that the Manchegan, that same evening, stabbed somebody else to death. "That show 'e is good fellow—too much after 'is enemy," said Gil Pérez affably. So Manvers felt justified in his refusal to wear mail or carry either revolver or sword-stick; and by the end of the week he forgot that he was a marked man.

On Sunday he told Gil Pérez that he intended to visit the Chapel of the Recogidas. The rogue's face twinkled. "Good, sir, good. We go. I show you Manuela all-holy like a nun. I know whata she do. Look for 'eaven all day. That Chucha she tell me something and the *portero*, 'e damgood fellow."

Resplendent in white duck trousers, Mr. Manvers was remarked upon by a purely native company of sightseers. Quick-eyed ladies in mantillas were there, making play with their fans and scent-bottles; attendant cavaliers found something of which to whisper in the cool-faced Englishman with his fair beard, blue eyes and eye-glass, his air of detachment, which disguised his real feelings, and of readiness to be entertained, which they misinterpreted.

The facts were that he was painfully involved in Manuela's fate, and uncomfortably near being in love again with the lovely unfortunate. She was no longer a pretty thing to be kissed, no longer even a handsome murderess; she was become a heroine, a martyr, a thing enskied and sainted.

He had seen more than he had been meant to see during his ordeal in the *Audiencia*—her consciousness of himself, for instance, as revealed in that last dying look she had given him, that long look before she turned and followed her jailers out of court. He guessed at her agonies of shame, he understood how it was that she had courted it; in fine, he knew very well that her heart was in his keeping—and that's a dangerous possession for a man already none too sure of the whereabouts of his own.

When the organ music thrilled and opened, and the *Recogidas* filed in—some hundred of them—his heart for a moment stood still, as he scanned them through the gloom. They were dressed exactly alike in dull clinging gray, all wore close-fitting white caps, were nearly all dead-white in the face. They all shuffled, as convicts do as they move close-ordered to their work afield.

It shocked him that he utterly failed to identify Manuela—and it brought him sharply to his better senses that Gil Pérez saw her at once.

"See her there, master, see there my beautiful," the man groaned under his breath, and Manvers looked where he pointed, and saw her; but now the glamor was gone. Gil was her declared lover. The Squire of Somerset could not stoop to be his valet's rival.

The Squire of Somerset, however, observed that she held herself more stiffly than her co-mates, and shuffled less. The prison garb clothed her like a weed; she had the trick of wearing clothes so that they draped the figure, not concealed it, were as wax upon it, not a cerement. That which fell shapeless and heavily from the shoulders of the others, upon her seemed to grow rather from the waist—to creep upward over the shoulders, as ivy steals clinging over a statue in a park. Here, said he, is a maiden that cannot be hid. Call her a murderess,

she remains perfect woman; call her convict, Magdalen, she is some man's solace. He looked at Gil Pérez, motionless and intent by his side, and heard his short breath. There is her mate, he thought to himself, and was saved.

They filed out as they had come in. They all stood, turned toward the exit, and waited until they were directed to move. Then they followed each other like sheep through a gateway, looking, so far as he could see, at nothing, expecting nothing and remembering nothing. A down-trodden herd, he conceived them, their wits dulled by toil. He was not near enough to see the gleam which kept them alive. Nuns gave them their orders with authoritative hands, quick always, and callous by routine, probably not intended to be so harsh as they appeared. He saw one girl pushed forward by the shoulder with such suddenness that she nearly fell; another flinched at a passionate command, another scowled as she passed her mistress. He watched to see how Manuela, who had come in one of the first and must go out one of the last, would bear herself, and was relieved by a pretty and enheartening episode.

Manuela, as she passed, drew her hand along the top of the bench with a lingering, trailing touch. It encountered that of the nun in command, and he saw the nun's hand enclose and press the penitent's. He saw Manuela's look of gratitude, and the nun's smiling affection; he believed that Manuela blushed. That gratified him extremely, and enlarged his benevolent intention.

Had Gil Pérez seen it? He thought not. Gil Pérez's black eyes were fixed upon Manuela's form. They glittered like a cat's when he watches a bird in a shrubbery. The valet was quite unlike himself as he followed his master homeward and asked leave of absence for the evening—for the first time in his

period of service. Manvers had no doubt at all how that evening was spent—in rapt attention below the barred windows of the House of the Recogidas.

That was so. Gil Pérez “played the bear,” as they call it, from dusk till the small hours—perfectly happy, in a rapture of adoration which the Squire of Somerset could never have realized. All the romance which, if we may believe Cervantes, once transfigured the life of Spain, and gilded the commonest acts till they seemed confident appeals for the applause of God, feats boldly done under heaven’s thronged barriers, is nowadays concentrated in this one strange vigil which all lovers have to keep.

Gil Pérez the quick, the admirable servant, the jaunty adventurer, the assured rogue, had vanished. Here he stood beneath the stars, breathing prayers and praises—a little valet sighing for a convicted Magdalen, a young knight keeping watch beneath his lady’s tower. And he was not alone there: at due intervals along the frowning walls were posted other servants of the sleeping girls behind them; other knights at watch and ward.

The prayer he breathed was the prayer breathed too for Dolores or Mercedes in prison. “Virgin of Atocha, Virgin of the Pillar, Virgin of Sorrow, of Divine Compassion, send happy sleep to thy handmaid Manuela, shed the dew of thy love upon her eyelids, keep smooth her brows, keep innocent her lips. Dignify me, thy servant, Gil Pérez, more than other men, that I may be worthy to sustain this high honor of love.”

His eyes never wavered from a certain upper window. It was as blank as all the rest, differed in no way from any other of a row of five-and-twenty. To him it was the pride of the great building.

“O fortunate stars!” he whispered to himself, “that can look through these and see my love upon

her bed. O rays too much blessed, that can kiss her eyelids, and touch lightly upon the scented strands of her hair! O breath of the night, that can fan in her white neck and stroke her arm stretched out over the coverlet! To you, night-wind, and to you, stars, I give an errand; you shall take a message from me to lovely Manuela of the golden tresses. Tell her that I am watching out the dark; tell her that no harm shall come to her. Whisper in her ear, mingle with her dreams, and tell her that she has a lover. Tell her also that the nights in Madrid are not like those in Valencia, and that she would do well to cover her arm and shoulder up lest she catch cold, and suffer."

There spoke the realist, the romantic realist of Spain; for it is to be observed that Gil Pérez did not know at all whereabouts Manuela lay asleep, and could not, naturally, know whether her arm was out of bed or in it. He had forgotten also that her hair had been cut off—but these are trifles. Happy he! he had forgotten much more than that.

When Manvers told him that he intended to pay Manuela a visit on the day allowed, Gil Pérez suffered the tortures of the damned. Jealous rage consumed his vitals like a corroding acid, which reason and loyalty had no power to assuage. Yet reason and loyalty played out their allotted parts, and it had been a fine sight to see Gil grinning and gibbering at his own white face in the looking-glass, shaking his finger at it and saying to it, in English (since it was his master's shaving-glass), "Gil Pérez, my fellow, you shut up!" He said it many times, for he had nothing else to say—jealousy deprived him of his wits, and he felt better for the discipline. When Manvers returned there was no sign upon Gil's brisk person of the stormy conflict which had ravaged it.

Manvers had seen her and, by Sister Chucha's charity had seen her alone. The poor girl had fallen at his feet and would have kissed them if he had not lifted her up. "No, my dear, no," he said; "it is I who ought to kneel. You have done wonders for me. You are as brave as a lion, Manuela; but I must get you away from this place."

"No, no, Don Osmundo," she cried, flushing up, "indeed I am better here." She stood before him, commanding herself, steeling herself in the presence of this man she loved against any hint of her beating heart.

He had himself well in hand. Her beauty, her distress and misfortune could not touch him now. All that he had for her was admiration and pure benevolence. Fatal offerings for a woman inflamed: so soon as she perceived it her courage was needed for another tussle. Her blood lay like lead in her veins, her heart sank to the deeps of her, and she must screw it back again to the work of the day.

He took her hand, and she let him have it. What could it matter now what he had of hers? "Manuela," he said, "there is a way of freedom for you, if you will take it. A man loves you truly, and asks nothing better than to work for you. I know him—he's been a good friend to me. Will you let me pay you off my debt? His name is Gil Pérez. You have seen him, I know. He's an honest man, my dear, and loves you to distraction. What are you going to say to him if he asks for you?"

She stood, handfast to the man who had kissed her—and in kissing her had drawn out her soul through her lips; who now was pleading that another man might have her dead lips. The mockery of the thing might have made a worse woman laugh horribly; but this was a woman made pure by love. She saw no mockery, no discrepancy in what he asked

her. She knew he was in earnest, and wished her nothing but good.

And she could see, without knowing that she saw, how much he desired to be rid of his obligation to her. Therefore, she reasoned, she would be serving him again if she agreed to what he proposed. Here—if laughing had been her mood—was matter for laughter, that when he tried to pay her off he was really getting deeper into debt. Look at it in this way: You owe a fine sum, principal and interest, to a Jew; you go to him and propose to borrow again of him in order that you may pay off the first debt and be done with it. The Jew might laugh but he would lend; and Manuela, who hoarded love, hugged to her heart the new bond she was offered. The deeper he went into debt the more she must lend him! There was pleasure in this—shrill pleasure not far off from pain; but she was a child of pleasure, and must take what she could get.

Her grave eyes, uncurtained, searched his face. "Is this what you desire me to do? Is this what you ask of me?"

"My dear," said he, "I desire your freedom. I desire to see you happy and cared for. I must go away. I must go home. I shall go more willingly if I know that I have provided for my friend."

She urged a half-hearted plea. "I am very well here, Don Osmundo. The sisters are kind to me, the work is light. I might be happy here——"

"What!" he cried. "In prison!"

"It is what I deserve," she said; but he would not hear of it.

"You are here through my blunders," he insisted. "If I hadn't left you with that scoundrel in the wood this would never have happened. And there's another thing which I must say——" He grew very serious. "I'm ashamed of myself—but I must

say it." She looked at her hands in her lap, knowing what was coming.

"They said, you know, that Esteban must have thought me your lover." She sat as still as death. "Well—I was."

Not a word from her. "My dear," he went on painfully—for Eleanor Vernon's clear gray eyes were on him now, "I must tell you that I did what I had no business to do. There's a lady in England who—whom—I was carried away—I thought ——" He stopped, truly shocked at what he had thought her to be. "Now that I know you, Manuela, I tell you fairly I behaved like a villain."

Her face was flung up like that of a spurred horse; she was on the point to reveal herself—to tell him that in that act of his lay all her glory. But she stopped in time—and resumed her drooping, and her dejection. "I must serve him still—serve him always," was her burden.

"I was your lover truly," he continued, "after I knew what you had risked for me, what you had brought yourself to do for me. Not before that. Before that I had been a thief—a brute. But after it I loved you—and then I had your cross set in gold—and betrayed you into Don Luis's mad old hands. All this trouble is my fault—you are here through me—you must be got out through me. Gil Pérez is a better man than I am ever likely to be. He loves you sincerely. He loved you before you gave yourself up. You know that, I expect . . ."

She knew it, of course, perfectly well; but she said nothing.

"He wouldn't wish to bustle you into marriage, or anything of the sort. He's a gentleman, is Gil Pérez, and I shall see that he doesn't ask for you empty-handed. I am sure he can make you happy; and I tell you fairly that the only way I can be happy myself is to know that I have made you

amends." He got up—at the end of his resources. "Let me leave his case before you. He'll please it in his own way, you'll find. I can't help thinking that you must know what the state of his feeling is. Think of him as kindly as you can and think of me, too, Manuela, as a man who has done you a great wrong, and wants to put himself right if he may." He held out his hand. "Good-bye, my dear. I'll see you again, I hope—or send a better man."

"Good-bye, Don Osmundo," she said, and gave him her hand. He pressed it and went away, feeling extremely satisfied with the hour's work. Eleanor Vernon's clear gray eyes smiled approvingly upon him. "Damn it all," he said to himself, "I've got that tangle out at last." He began to think of England — Somersetshire — Eleanor — partridges. "I shall get home, I hope, by the first," he said.

"He's a splendor, your *novio*, Manuelita," said Sister Chucha, and emphasized her approval with a kiss. "Fiel!" she cried, "what a cold cheek! The cheek of a dead woman. And you with a *hidalgo* for your *novio*!"

CHAPTER XIX

THE WAR OPENS

RETURNING from his visit, climbing the Calle Mayor at that blankest hour of the summer day when the sun is at his fiercest, raging vertically down upon a street empty of folk but glittering like glass, and radiant with quivering air, Manvers was shot at from a distance, so far as he could judge, of thirty yards. He heard the ball go shrilling past him and then splash and flatten upon a church

wall beyond. He turned quickly, but could see nothing. Not a sign of life was upon the broad way, not a curtain was lifted, not a shutter swung apart. To all intents and purposes he was upon the Castilian plains.

Unarmed though he was, he went back upon his traces down the hill, expecting at any moment that the assassin would flare out upon him and shoot him down at point-blank. He went back in all some fifty yards. There was no man lurking that he could discover. After a few moments' irresolution—whether to stand or proceed—he decided that the sooner he was within walls the better. He turned again and walked briskly toward the Puerto del Sol.

Sixty yards or so from the great *plaza*, within sight of it, he was fired at again, and this time he was hit in the muscles of the left arm. He felt the burning sting, the shock and the aching. The welling of blood was a blessed relief. On this occasion he pushed forward, and reached his inn without further trouble. He sent for Gil Pérez, who whisked off for the surgeon; by the time he brought one in Manvers was feverish, and so remained until the morning, tossing and jerking through the fervent night, with his arm stiff from shoulder to finger-points.

"Thata dam thief, sir, 'e count on you never looka back," said Gil Pérez, nodding grimly. "Capitán Rodney, 'e all the same as you. Walka 'is blessed way, never taka no notice of anybody. See 'im at Sevastopol do lika that all the time. So then this assassin 'e creep after you lika one o'clock up Calle Mayor, leta fly at your twice, three times, four time—so longa you let 'im. You walka backward, 'e never shoot—you see."

Manvers felt that to walk backward would be at least as tiresome as to walk forward and be shot

at in a city which now held little for him but danger and *ennui*. Not even Manuela's fortunes could prevail against boredom. As he lay upon his hateful bed, disgust with Spain grew upon him hand over hand. He became irritable. To Gil Pérez he announced his determination. This sort of thing must end.

Gil bowed and rubbed his hands. "You go 'ome, sir? Is besta place for you. Don Luis, 'e kill you for sure. You go, 'e go 'ome esleep on 'is olda bed—too much satisfy." Under his breath he added, "Poor Manuela—my poor beautiful! She is tormented in vain!"

Manvers told him what had passed in the House of the Recogidas. "I spoke for you, Gil. I think she will listen to you."

Gil lifted up his head. "Every nighta, when you are asleep, sir, I estand under the wall. I toucha—I say, 'Keep safa guard of Manuela, you wall.' If she 'ave me I maka 'er never sorry for it. I love 'er too much. But I think she call me dirt. I know all about 'er too much."

What he knew he kept hidden; but one day he went to the Recogidas and asked to see Sister Chucha. He was obsequious, but impassioned, full of cajolery, but not for a moment did he try to impose upon his countrywoman by any assumption of omniscience. That was reserved for his master, and was indeed a kind of compliment to his needs. Sister Chucha heard him at first with astonishment.

"Then it was for you, Gil Pérez, that the gentleman came here?"

Gil nodded. "It was for me, sister. How could it be otherwise?"

"I thought that gentleman was interested."

Gil peered closely into her face. "That gentleman is persecuted. Manuela can save him from the danger he stands in—but only through me.

Sister, I love her more than life and the sky, but I am content, and she will be content that life shall be dumb and the sky dark if that gentleman may go free. Let me speak with Manuela—you will see."

The nun was troubled. "Too many see Manuela," she said. "Only yesterday there came here a man."

"Hal!" said Gil Perez fiercely. "What manner of a man?"

"A little man," she told him, "that came in creeping, rounding his shoulders—so, and swimming with his hands. He saw Manuela, and left her trembling. She was white and gray—and very cold."

"That man," said Gil, folding his arms, "was our enemy. Let me now see Manuela."

It was more a command than an entreaty. Sister Chucha obeyed it. She went away without a word, and returned presently, leading Manuela by the hand. She brought her into the room, released her, and stood, watching and listening.

Eyes leaped to meet—Manuela was on fire, but Gil's fire ate up hers.

"Señorita, you have surrendered in vain. These men must have blood for blood. The patron lies wounded, and will die unless we save him. Señorita, you are willing, and I am willing—speak."

She regarded him steadily. "You know that I am willing, Gil Pérez."

"It was Tormillo you saw yesterday?"

"Yes, Tormillo—like a toad."

"He was sent to mock you in your pain. He is a fool. We will show him a fool in his own likeness. Are you content to die?"

"You know that I am content."

He turned to the nun. "Sister Chucha, you will let this lady go. She goes out to die—I, who love her, am content that she should die. If she does

not, she returns here. If she dies, you will not ask for her."

The sister stared. "What do you mean, you two? How is she to die? When? Where?"

"She is to die under the knife of Don Luis," said Gil Pérez. "And I am to lay her there."

"You, my friend! And what have you to do with Don Luis and his affairs?"

"Manuela is young," said Gil, "and loves her life. I am young, and love Manuela more than life. If I take her to Don Luis and say, 'Kill her, señor Don Luis, and in that act kill me also,' I think he will be satisfied. I can see no other way of saving the life of Don Osmundo."

"And what do you ask me to do?" the nun asked presently.

"I ask you to give me Manuela presently for one hour or for eternity. If Don Luis rejects her, I bring her back to you here—on the word of an old Christian. If he takes her, she goes directly to God, where you would have her be. Sister Chucha," said Gil Pérez finely, "I am persuaded that you will help us."

Sister Chucha looked at her hands—fat and very white hands. "You ask me to do a great deal—to incur great danger—for a gentleman who is nothing to me."

"He is everything to Manuela," said Gil softly. "That you know."

"And you, Gil Pérez—what is he to you?" This was Sister Chucha's sharpest. Gil took it with a blink.

"He is my master—that is something. He is more to Manuela. And she is everything to me. Sister, you may trust me with her."

The nun turned from him to the motionless beauty by her side.

"You, my child, what do you say to this project? Shall I let you go?"

Manuela wavered a little. She swayed about and balanced herself with her hands. But she quickly recovered.

"Sister Chucha," she said, "let me go." The soft green light from her eyes spoke for her.

CHAPTER XX

MEETING BY MOONLIGHT

BY MOONLIGHT in the sheeted park four persons met to do battle for the life of Mr. Manvers, while he lay grumbling and burning in his bed, behind the curtains of it. Don Luis Ramonez was there, the first to come—tall and gaunt, with undying pride in his hollow eyes, like a spectre of rancour kept out of the grave. Behind him Tormillo came creeping, a little restless man, dogging his master's footsteps, watching for word or sign from him. These two stood by the lake in the huge empty park, still under its shroud of white moonlight.

Don Luis picked up the corner of his cloak and threw it over his left shoulder. He stalked stately up and down the arch of a circle which a stone seat defined. Tormillo sat upon the edge of the seat, his elbows on his knees, and looked at the ground. But he kept his master in the tail of his eye. Now and again furtively, but as if he loved what he feared, he put his hand into his breast and felt the edge of his long knife.

Once indeed, when Don Luis on his sentry-march had his back to him, he drew out the blade and turned it under the moon, watching the cold light shiver and flash up along it and down. No fleck or flaw was upon it, it showed the moon whole within its face. This pair, each absorbed in his own business, waited for the other.

Tormillo saw them coming and marked it by rising from his seat. He peered along the edge of the water to be sure, then he went noiselessly toward them, looking back often over his shoulder at Don Luis. But his master did not seem to be aware of any one. He stood still, looking over the gloomy lake.

Tormillo, having gone half way, waited. Gil Pérez hailed him. "Is that you, Tormillo?" The muffled figure of a girl by his side gave no sign.

"It is I, Gil Pérez. Be not afraid."

"If I were afraid of anything, I should not be here. I have brought Manuela of her own will."

"Good," said Tormillo. "Give her to me. We will go to Don Luis."

"Yes, you shall take her. I will remain here. Señorita, will you go with him?"

Manuela said, "I am ready."

Tormillo turned his face away, and Gil Pérez with passion whispered to Manuela: "My soul, my life, Manuela. One sign from you, and I kill him!"

She turned him her rapt face. "No sign from me, brother—no sign from me."

"My life," sighed Gil Pérez. "Soul of my soul!" She held out her hand.

"Pray for me," she said. He snatched at her hand, knelt on his knee, stooped over it, and then, jumping up, flung himself from her.

"Take her, you, Tormillo."

Tormillo took her by the hand, and they went together toward the semi-circular seat, in whose centre stood Don Luis like a black statue. Soft-footed went she, swaying a little, like a gossamer caught in a light wind. Don Luis half turned, and saluted her.

"Master," said Tormillo, "Manuela is here." As if she were a figure to be displayed he lightly threw

back her veil. Manuela stood still and bowed her head to the uncovered gentleman.

"I am ready, señor Don Luis," she said. He came nearer, watching her, saying nothing.

"I killed Don Bartolomé your son," she said, "because I feared him. He told me that he had come to kill me; but I was beforehand with him there. It is true that I loved Don Osmundo, who had been kind to me."

"You killed my son," said Don Luis, "and you loved the Englishman."

"I own the truth," she said, "and am ready to requite you. I thought to have satisfied you by giving myself up—but you have shown me that that was not enough. Now, then, I give you myself of my own will, if you will let Don Osmundo go free. Will you make a bargain with me? He knew nothing of Don Bartolomé your son."

Don Luis bowed. Manuela turned her head slowly about to the still trees, to the sleeping water, to the moon in the clear sky, as if to greet the earth for the last time. For one moment her eyes fell on Gil Pérez afar off—on his knees with his hands raised to heaven.

"I am ready," she said again, and bowed her head. Tormillo put into Don Luis's hands the long knife. Don Luis threw it out far into the lake. It fled like a streak of light, struck, skimmed along the surface, and sank without a splash. He went to Manuela and put his hand on her shoulder. She quivered at his touch.

"My child," said he, "I cannot touch you. You have redeemed yourself. Go now, and sin no more."

He left her and went his way, stately, along the edge of the water. He stalked past Gil Pérez at his prayers as if he saw him not—as may well be the case. But Gil Pérez got upon his feet as he went by, and saluted him with profound respect.

Immediately afterward he went like the wind to Manuela. He found her crying freely on the stone seat, her arms upon the back of it and her face hidden in her arms. She wept with passion; her sobs were pitiful to hear. Tormillo, not at all moved, waited for Gil Pérez.

"*Esa te quiere bien que te hace llorar,*" he said: "She loves thee well; that makes thee weep."

"I weep not," said Gil Pérez; "it is she that weeps. As for me, I praise God."

"Aha, Gil Pérez," Tormillo began—then he chuckled. "For you, my friend, there's still sunlight on the wall."

Gil nodded. "I believe it." Then he looked fiercely at the other man. "Go you with God, Tormillo, and leave me with her."

Tormillo stared, spat on the ground. "No need of your 'chuck chuck' to an old dog. I go, Gil Pérez. *Adiós, hermano.*"

Gil Pérez sat on the stone seat, and drew Manuela's head to his shoulder. She suffered him.





THE DUEL

JOSEPH CONRAD

THE DUEL

I

NAPOLEON I, whose career had the quality of duel against the whole of Europe, disliked duelling between the officers of his army. The great military emperor was not a swashbuckler, and had little respect for tradition.

Nevertheless, a story of duelling, which became a legend in the army, runs through the epic of imperial wars. To the surprise and admiration of their fellows, two officers, like insane artists trying to gild refined gold or paint the lily, pursued a private contest through the years of universal carnage. They were officers of cavalry, and their connection with the high-spirited but fanciful animal which carries men into battle seems particularly appropriate. It would be difficult to imagine for heroes of this legend two officers of infantry of the line, for example, whose fantasy is tamed by much walking exercise, and whose valor necessarily must be of a more plodding kind. As to gunners or engineers, whose heads are kept cool on a diet of mathematics, it is simply unthinkable.

The names of the two officers were Feraud and D'Hubert, and they were both lieutenants in a regiment of hussars, but not in the same regiment.

Feraud was doing regimental work, but Lieu-

tenant D'Hubert had the good fortune to be attached to the person of the general commanding the division, as *officier d'ordonnance*. It was in Strasbourg, and in this agreeable and important garrison they were enjoying greatly a short interval of peace. They were enjoying it, though both intensely warlike, because it was a sword-sharpening, firelock-cleaning peace, dear to a military heart and undamaging to military prestige, inasmuch that no one believed in its sincerity or duration.

Under those historical circumstances, so favorable to the proper appreciation of military leisure, Lieutenant D'Hubert, one fine afternoon, made his way along a quiet street of a cheerful suburb toward Lieutenant Feraud's quarters, which were in a private house with a garden at the back, belonging to an old maiden lady.

His knock at the door was answered instantly by a young maid in Alsatian costume. Her fresh complexion and her long eyelashes, lowered demurely at the sight of the tall officer, caused Lieutenant D'Hubert, who was accessible to esthetic impressions, to relax the cold, severe gravity of his face. At the same time he observed that the girl had over her arm a pair of hussar's breeches, blue with a red stripe.

"Lieutenant Feraud in?" he inquired benevolently.

"Oh, no, sir! He went out at six this morning."

The pretty maid tried to close the door. Lieutenant D'Hubert, opposing this move with gentle firmness, stepped into the ante-room, jingling his spurs.

"Come, my dear! You don't mean to say he has not been home since six o'clock this morning?"

Saying these words, Lieutenant D'Hubert opened without ceremony the door of a room so comfortably and neatly ordered that only from internal evidence in the shape of boots, uniforms, and military accoutrements did he acquire the conviction that it was Lieutenant Feraud's room. And he saw also that Lieutenant Feraud was not at home. The truthful maid had followed him, and raised her candid eyes to his face.

"H'm!" said Lieutenant D'Hubert, greatly disappointed, for he had already visited all the haunts where a lieutenant of hussars could be found of a fine afternoon. "So he's out? And do you happen to know, my dear, why he went out at six this morning?"

"No," she answered readily. "He came home late last night, and snored. I heard him when I got up at five. Then he dressed himself in his oldest uniform and went out. Service, I suppose."

"Service? Not a bit of it!" cried Lieutenant D'Hubert. "Learn, my angel, that he went out thus early to fight a duel with a civilian."

She heard this news without a quiver of her dark eyelashes. It was very obvious that the actions of Lieutenant Feraud were generally above criticism. She only looked up for a moment in mute surprise, and Lieutenant D'Hubert concluded from this absence of emotion that she must have seen Lieutenant Feraud since that morning. He looked around the room.

"Come!" he insisted, with confidential familiarity. "He's perhaps somewhere in the house now?"

She shook her head.

"So much the worse for him!" continued Lieutenant D'Hubert, in a tone of anxious conviction. "But he has been home this morning."

This time the pretty maid nodded slightly.

"He has!" cried Lieutenant D'Hubert. "And went out again? What for? Couldn't he keep quietly indoors! What a lunatic! My dear girl _____,"

Lieutenant D'Hubert's natural kindness of disposition and strong sense of comradeship helped his powers of observation. He changed his tone to a most insinuating softness, and, gazing at the hussar's breeches hanging over the arm of the girl, he appealed to the interest she took in Lieutenant Feraud's comfort and happiness. He was pressing and persuasive. He used his eyes, which were kind and fine, with excellent effect. His anxiety to get hold at once of Lieutenant Feraud, for Lieutenant Feraud's own good, seemed so genuine that at last it overcame the girl's unwillingness to speak. Unluckily she had not much to tell. Lieutenant Feraud had returned home shortly before ten, had walked straight into his room, and had thrown himself on his bed to resume his slumbers. She had heard him snore rather louder than before far into the afternoon. Then he got up, put on his best uniform, and went out. That was all she knew.

She raised her eyes, and Lieutenant D'Hubert stared into them incredulously.

"It's incredible! Gone parading the town in his

best uniform! My dear child, don't you know he ran that civilian through this morning? Clean through, as you spit a hare."

The pretty maid heard the gruesome intelligence without any signs of distress. But she pressed her lips together thoughtfully.

"He isn't parading the town," she remarked in a low tone. "Far from it."

"The civilian's family is making an awful row," continued Lieutenant D'Hubert, pursuing his train of thought. "And the General is very angry. It's one of the best families in the town. Feraud ought to have kept close, at least——"

"What will the General do to him?" inquired the girl anxiously.

"He won't have his head cut off, to be sure," grumbled Lieutenant D'Hubert. "His conduct is positively indecent. He's making no end of trouble for himself by this sort of bravado."

"But he isn't parading the town," the maid insisted in a shy murmur.

"Why, yes! Now I think of it, I haven't seen him anywhere about. What on earth has he done with himself?"

"He's gone to pay a call," suggested the maid, after a moment of silence.

Lieutenant D'Hubert started.

"A call! Do you mean a call on a lady? The cheek of the man! And how do you know this, my dear?"

Without concealing her woman's scorn for the denseness of the masculine mind, the pretty maid reminded him that Lieutenant Feraud had arrayed

himself in his best uniform before going out. He had also put on his newest dolman, she added, in a tone as if this conversation were getting on her nerves, and turned away brusquely.

Lieutenant D'Hubert, without questioning the accuracy of the deduction, did not see that it advanced him much on his official quest. For his quest after Lieutenant Feraud had an official character. He did not know any of the women this fellow, who had run a man through in the morning, was likely to visit in the afternoon. The two young men knew each other but slightly. He bit his gloved finger in perplexity.

"Call!" he exclaimed. "Call on the devil!"

The girl, with her back to him, and folding the hussar's breeches on a chair, protested with a vexed little laugh:

"Oh, dear, no! On Madame de Lionne."

Lieutenant D'Hubert whistled softly. Madame de Lionne was the wife of a high official who had a well-known *salon* and some pretensions to sensibility and elegance. The husband was a civilian, and old; but the society of the *salon* was young and military. Lieutenant D'Hubert had whistled, not because the idea of pursuing Lieutenant Feraud into that very *salon* was disagreeable to him, but because, having arrived in Strasbourg only lately, he had not had the time as yet to get an introduction to Madame de Lionne. And what was that swashbuckler Feraud doing there, he wondered. He did not seem the sort of man who——

"Are you certain of what you say?" asked Lieutenant D'Hubert.

The girl was perfectly certain. Without turning round to look at him, she explained that the coachman of their next-door neighbours knew the *maître-d'hôtel* of Madame de Lionne. In this way she had her information. And she was perfectly certain. In giving this assurance she sighed. Lieutenant Feraud called there nearly every afternoon, she added.

"Ah, bah!" exclaimed D'Hubert ironically. His opinion of Madame de Lionne went down several degrees. Lieutenant Feraud did not seem to him specially worthy of attention on the part of a woman with a reputation for sensibility and elegance. But there was no saying. At bottom they were all alike—very practical rather than idealistic. Lieutenant D'Hubert, however, did not allow his mind to dwell on these considerations.

"By thunder!" he reflected aloud. "The General goes there sometimes. If he happens to find the fellow making eyes at the lady there will be the devil to pay! Our General is not a very accommodating person, I can tell you."

"Go quickly, then! Don't stand here now I've told you where he is!" cried the girl, colouring to the eyes.

"Thanks, my dear! I don't know what I would have done without you."

After manifesting his gratitude in an aggressive way, which at first was repulsed violently, and then submitted to with a sudden and still more repellent indifference Lieutenant D'Hubert took his departure.

He clanked and jingled along the streets with a martial swagger. To run a comrade to earth in a

drawing-room where he was not known did not trouble him in the least. A uniform is a passport. His position as *officier d'ordonnance* of the General added to his assurance. Moreover, now that he knew where to find Lieutenant Feraud, he had no option. It was a service matter.

Madame de Lionne's house had an excellent appearance. A man in livery, opening the door of a large drawing-room with a waxed floor, shouted his name and stood aside to let him pass. It was a reception day. The ladies wore big hats surcharged with a profusion of feathers; their bodies, sheathed in clinging white gowns from the armpits to the tips of the low satin shoes, looked sylphlike and cool in a great display of bare necks and arms. The men who talked with them, on the contrary, were arrayed heavily in multi-coloured garments with collars up to their ears and thick sashes round their waists. Lieutenant D'Hubert made his unabashed way across the room and, bowing low before a sylphlike form reclining on a couch, offered his apologies for this intrusion, which nothing could excuse but the extreme urgency of the service order he had to communicate to his comrade Feraud. He proposed to himself to return presently in a more regular manner and beg forgiveness for interrupting the interesting conversation . . .

A bare arm was extended toward him with gracious nonchalance even before he had finished speaking. He pressed the hand respectfully to his lips, and made the mental remark that it was bony. Madame de Lionne was a blonde, with too fine a skin and a long face.

"C'est ça!" she said, with an ethereal smile, disclosing a set of large teeth. "Come this evening to plead for your forgiveness."

"I will not fail, madame."

Meantime Lieutenant Feraud, splendid in his new dolman and the extremely polished boots of his calling, sat on a chair within a foot of the couch, one hand resting on his thigh, the other twirling his moustache to a point. At a significant glance from D'Hubert he rose without alacrity, and followed him into the recess of a window.

"What is it you want with me?" he asked, with astonishing indifference. Lieutenant D'Hubert could not imagine that in the innocence of his heart and simplicity of his conscience Lieutenant Feraud took a view of his duel in which neither remorse nor yet a rational apprehension of consequences had any place. Though he had no clear recollection how the quarrel had originated (it was begun in an establishment where beer and wine are drunk late at night), he had not the slightest doubt of being himself the outraged party. He had had two experienced friends for his seconds. Everything had been done according to the rules governing that sort of adventures. And a duel is obviously fought for the purpose of some one being at least hurt, if not killed outright. The civilian got hurt. That also was in order. Lieutenant Feraud was perfectly tranquil; but Lieutenant D'Hubert took it for affectation, and spoke with a certain vivacity.

"I am directed by the General to give you the order to go at once to your quarters, and remain there under close arrest."

It was now the turn of Lieutenant Feraud to be astonished. "What the devil are you telling me there?" he murmured faintly, and fell into such profound wonder that he could only follow mechanically the motions of Lieutenant D'Hubert. The two officers, one tall, with an interesting face and moustache the colour of ripe corn, the other short and sturdy, with a hooked nose and a thick crop of black curly hair, approached the mistress of the house to take their leave. Madame de Lionne, a woman of eclectic taste, smiled upon these armed young men with impartial sensibility and an equal share of interest. Madame de Lionne took her delight in the infinite variety of the human species. All the other eyes in the drawing-room followed the departing officers; and when they had gone out one or two men, who had already heard of the duel, imparted the information to the sylphlike ladies, who received it with faint shrieks of humane concern.

Meantime the two hussars walked side by side, Lieutenant Feraud trying to master the hidden reason of things which in this instance eluded the grasp of his intellect; Lieutenant D'Hubert feeling annoyed at the part he had to play, because the General's instructions were that he should see personally that Lieutenant Feraud carried out his orders to the letter, and at once.

"The chief seems to know this animal," he thought, eyeing his companion, whose round face, the round eyes, and even the twisted-up jet-black little moustache seemed animated by a mental exasperation against the incomprehensible. And aloud

he observed rather reproachfully, "The General is in a devilish fury with you!"

Lieutenant Feraud stopped short on the edge of the pavement, and cried in the accents of unmistakable sincerity, "What on earth for?" The innocence of the fiery Gascon soul was depicted in the manner in which he seized his head in both hands as if to prevent it bursting with perplexity.

"For the duel," said Lieutenant D'Hubert curtly. He was annoyed greatly at this sort of perverse fooling.

"The duel! The . . ."

Lieutenant Feraud passed from one paroxysm of astonishment into another. He dropped his hands and walked on slowly, trying to reconcile this information with the state of his own feelings. It was impossible. He burst out indignantly, "Was I to let that sauerkraut-eating civilian wipe his boots on the uniform of the Seventh Hussars?"

Lieutenant D'Hubert could not remain altogether unmoved by that simple sentiment. This little fellow was a lunatic, he thought to himself, but there was something in what he said.

"Of course I don't know how far you were justified," he began soothingly. "And the General himself may not be exactly informed. Those people have been deafening him with their lamentations."

"Ah! the General is not exactly informed," mumbled Lieutenant Feraud, walking faster and faster as his choler at the injustice of his fate began to rise. "He is not exactly . . . And he orders me under close arrest, with God knows what afterward!"

"Don't excite yourself like this," remonstrated the

other. "Your adversary's people are very influential, you know, and it looks bad enough on the face of it. The General had to take notice of their complaint at once. I don't think he means to be over-severe with you. It's the best thing for you to be kept out of sight for a while."

"I am very much obliged to the General," muttered Lieutenant Feraud through his teeth. "And perhaps you would say I ought to be grateful to you, too, for the trouble you have taken to hunt me up in the drawing-room of a lady who——"

"Frankly," interrupted Lieutenant D'Hubert, with an innocent laugh, "I think you ought to be. I had no end of trouble to find out where you were. It wasn't exactly the place for you to disport yourself in under the circumstances. If the General had caught you there making eyes at the goddess of the temple . . . oh, my word! . . . He hates to be bothered with complaints against his officers, you know. And it looked uncommonly like sheer bravado."

The two officers had arrived now at the street door of Lieutenant Feraud's lodgings. The latter turned toward his companion. "Lieutenant D'Hubert," he said, "I have something to say to you which can't be said very well in the street. You can't refuse to come up."

The pretty maid had opened the door. Lieutenant Feraud brushed past her brusquely, and she raised her scared and questioning eyes to Lieutenant D'Hubert, who could do nothing but shrug his shoulders slightly as he followed with marked reluctance.

In his room Lieutenant Feraud unhooked the clasp, flung his new dolman on the bed, and, folding his arms across his chest, turned to the other hussar.

"Do you imagine I am a man to submit tamely to injustice?" he inquired in a boisterous voice.

"Oh, do be reasonable!" remonstrated Lieutenant D'Hubert.

"I am reasonable! I am perfectly reasonable!" retorted the other with ominous restraint. "I can't call the General to account for his behaviour, but you are going to answer to me for yours."

"I can't listen to this nonsense," murmured Lieutenant D'Hubert, making a slightly contemptuous grimace.

"You call this nonsense? It seems to me a perfectly plain statement. Unless you don't understand French."

"What on earth do you mean?"

"I mean," screamed suddenly Lieutenant Feraud, "to cut off your ears to teach you to disturb me with the General's orders when I am talking to a lady!"

A profound silence followed this mad declaration; and through the open window Lieutenant D'Hubert heard the little birds singing sanely in the garden. He said, preserving his calm, "Why! If you take that tone, of course I shall hold myself at your disposition whenever you are at liberty to attend to this affair; but I don't think you will cut my ears off."

"I am going to attend to it at once," declared Lieutenant Feraud, with extreme truculence. "If you are thinking of displaying your airs and graces

to-night in Madame de Lionne's *salon* you are very much mistaken."

"Really!" said Lieutenant D'Hubert, who was beginning to feel irritated, "you are an impracticable sort of fellow. The General's orders to me were to put you under arrest, not to carve you into small pieces. Good-morning!" And turning his back on the little Gascon, who, always sober in his potations, was as though born intoxicated with the sunshine of his vine-ripening country, the Northman, who could drink hard on occasion, but was born sober under the watery skies of Picardy, made for the door. Hearing, however, the unmistakable sound behind his back of a sword drawn from the scabbard, he had no option but to stop.

"Devil take this mad Southerner!" he thought, spinning round and surveying with composure the warlike posture of Lieutenant Feraud, with a bare sword in his hand.

"At once—at once!" stuttered Feraud, beside himself.

"You had my answer," said the other, keeping his temper very well.

At first he had been only vexed, and somewhat amused; but now his face got clouded. He was asking himself seriously how he could manage to get away. It was impossible to run from a man with a sword, and as to fighting him, it seemed completely out of the question. He waited a while, then said exactly what was in his heart.

"Drop this! I won't fight with you. I won't be made ridiculous."

"Ah, you won't?" hissed the Gascon. "I sup-

pose you prefer to be made infamous. Do you hear what I say? . . . Infamous! Infamous! Infamous!" he shrieked, rising and falling on his toes and getting very red in the face.

Lieutenant D'Hubert on the contrary became very pale at the sound of the unsavoury word for a moment, then flushed pink to the roots of his fair hair. "But you can't go out to fight; you are under arrest, you lunatic!" he objected, with angry scorn.

"There's the garden: it's big enough to lay out your long carcass in," spluttered the other, with such ardour that somehow the anger of the cooler man subsided.

"This is perfectly absurd," he said, glad enough to think he had found a way out of it for the moment. "We shall never get any of our comrades to serve as seconds. It's preposterous."

"Seconds! Damn the seconds! We don't want any seconds. Don't you worry about any seconds. I shall send word to your friends to come and bury you when I am done. And if you want any witnesses, I'll send word to the old girl to put her head out of a window at the back. Stay! There's the gardener. He'll do. He's as deaf as a post, but he has two eyes in his head. Come along! I will teach you, my staff officer, that the carrying about of a general's orders is not always child's play."

While thus discoursing he had unbuckled his empty scabbard. He sent it flying under the bed, and, lowering the point of the sword, brushed past the perplexed Lieutenant D'Hubert, exclaiming, "Follow me!" Directly he had flung open the door a faint shriek was heard, and the pretty maid, who

had been listening at the keyhole, staggered away, putting the backs of her hands over her eyes. Feraud did not seem to see her, but she ran after him and seized his left arm. He shook her off, and then she rushed toward Lieutenant D'Hubert and clawed at the sleeve of his uniform.

"Wretched man!" she sobbed. "Is this what you wanted to find him for?"

"Let me go," entreated Lieutenant D'Hubert, trying to disengage himself gently. "It's like being in a madhouse," he protested, with exasperation. "Do let me go! I won't do him any harm."

A fiendish laugh from Lieutenant Feraud commented that assurance. "Come along!" he shouted, with a stamp of his foot.

And Lieutenant D'Hubert did follow. He could do nothing else. Yet in vindication of his sanity it must be recorded that as he passed through the ante-room the notion of opening the street door and bolting out presented itself to this brave youth, only of course to be instantly dismissed, for he felt sure that the other would pursue him without shame or compunction. And the prospect of an officer of hussars being chased along the street by another officer of hussars with a naked sword could not be for a moment entertained. Therefore he followed into the garden. Behind them the girl tottered out, too. With ashy lips and wild scared eyes, she surrendered herself to a dreadful curiosity. She had also the notion of rushing if need be between Lieutenant Feraud and death.

The deaf gardener, utterly unconscious of approaching footsteps, went on watering his flowers

till Lieutenant Feraud thumped him on the back. Beholding suddenly an enraged man flourishing a big sabre, the old chap trembling in all his limbs dropped the watering-pot. At once Lieutenant Feraud kicked it away with great animosity, and, seizing the gardener by the throat, backed him against a tree. He held him there, shouting in his ear, "Stay here, and look on! You understand? You've got to look on! Don't dare budge from the spot!"

Lieutenant D'Hubert came slowly down the walk, unclasping his dolman with unconcealed disgust. Even then, with his hand already on the hilt of his sword, he hesitated to draw till a roar, "*En garde, fichtre*. What do you think you came here for?" and the rush of his adversary forced him to put himself as quickly as possible in a posture of defence.

The clash of arms filled that prim garden, which hitherto had known no more warlike sound than the click of clipping shears; and presently the upper part of an old lady's body was projected out of a window upstairs. She tossed her arms above her white cap, scolding in a cracked voice. The gardener remained glued to the tree, his toothless mouth open in idiotic astonishment, and a little farther up the path the pretty girl, as if spellbound to a small grass plot, ran a few steps this way and that, wringing her hands and muttering crazily. She did not rush between the combatants: the onslaughts of Lieutenant Feraud were so fierce that her heart failed her. Lieutenant D'Hubert, his faculties concentrated upon defence, needed all his skill and science of the sword to stop the rushes of his adversary. Twice

already he had to break ground. It bothered him to feel his foothold made insecure by the round, dry gravel of the path rolling under the hard soles of his boots. This was most unsuitable ground, he thought, keeping a watchful, narrowed gaze, shaded by long eyelashes, upon the fiery stare of his thick-set adversary. This absurd affair would ruin his reputation of a sensible, well-behaved, promising young officer. It would damage at any rate his immediate prospects, and lose him the good-will of his general. These worldly preoccupations were no doubt misplaced in view of the solemnity of the moment. A duel, whether regarded as a ceremony in the cult of honour, or even when reduced in its moral essence to a form of manly sport, demands a perfect singleness of intention, a homicidal austerity of mood. On the other hand, this vivid concern for his future had not a bad effect inasmuch as it began to rouse the anger of Lieutenant D'Hubert. Some seventy seconds had elapsed since they had crossed blades, and Lieutenant D'Hubert had to break ground again in order to avoid impaling his reckless adversary like a bettle for a cabinet of specimens. The result was that, misapprehending the motive, Lieutenant Feraud with a triumphant sort of snarl pressed his attack.

"This enraged animal will have me against the wall directly," thought Lieutenant D'Hubert. He imagined himself much closer to the house than he was, and he dared not turn his head; it seemed to him that he was keeping his adversary off with his eyes rather more than with his point. Lieutenant Feraud crouched and bounded with a fierce tigerish

agility fit to trouble the stoutest heart. But what was more appalling than the fury of a wild beast, accomplishing in all innocence of heart a natural function, was the fixity of savage purpose man alone is capable of displaying. Lieutenant D'Hubert in the midst of his worldly preoccupations perceived it at last. It was an absurd and damaging affair to be drawn into, but whatever silly intention the fellow had started with, it was clear enough that by this time he meant to kill—nothing less. He meant it with an intensity of will utterly beyond the inferior faculties of a tiger.

As is the case with constitutionally brave men, the full view of the danger interested Lieutenant D'Hubert. And directly he got properly interested, the length of his arm and the coolness of his head told in his favor. It was the turn of Lieutenant Feraud to recoil, with a bloodcurdling grunt of baffled rage. He made a swift feint, and then rushed straight forward.

"Ah! you would, would you?" Lieutenant D'Hubert exclaimed mentally. The combat had lasted nearly two minutes, time enough for any man to get embittered, apart from the merits of the quarrel. And all at once it was over. Trying to close breast to breast under his adversary's guard, Lieutenant Feraud received a slash on his shortened arm. He did not feel it in the least, but it checked his rush, and his feet slipping on the gravel he fell backward with great violence. The shock jarred his boiling brain into the perfect quietude of insensibility. Simultaneously with his fall the pretty servant-girl shrieked; but the old maiden lady at the window

ceased her scolding, and began to cross herself piously.

Beholding his adversary stretched out perfectly still, his face to the sky, Lieutenant D'Hubert thought he had killed him outright. The impression of having slashed hard enough to cut his man clean in two abode with him for a while in an exaggerated memory of the right good-will he had put into the blow. He dropped on his knees hastily by the side of the prostrate body. Discovering that not even the arm was severed, a slight sense of disappointment mingled with the feeling of relief. The fellow deserved the worst. But truly he did not want the death of that sinner. The affair was ugly enough as it stood, and Lieutenant D'Hubert addressed himself at once to the task of stopping the bleeding. In this task it was his fate to be ridiculously impeded by the pretty maid. Rending the air with screams of horror, she attacked him from behind and, twining her fingers in his hair, tugged back at his head. Why she should choose to hinder him at this precise moment he could not in the least understand. He did not try. It was all like a very wicked and harassing dream. Twice to save himself from being pulled over he had to rise and fling her off. He did this stoically, without a word, kneeling down again at once to go on with his work. But the third time, his work being done, he seized her and held her arms pinned to her body. Her cap was half off, her face was red, her eyes blazed with crazy boldness. He looked mildly into them while she called him a wretch, a traitor, and a murderer many times in succession. This did not

annoy him so much as the conviction that she had managed to scratch his face abundantly. Ridicule would be added to the scandal of the story. He imagined the adorned tale making its way through the garrison of the town, through the whole army on the frontier, with every possible distortion of motive and sentiment and circumstance, spreading a doubt upon the sanity of his conduct and the distinction of his taste even to the very ears of his honorable family. It was all very well for that fellow Feraud, who had no connections, no family to speak of, and no quality but courage, which, anyhow, was a matter of course, and possessed by every single trooper in the whole mass of French cavalry. Still holding down the arms of the girl in a strong grip, Lieutenant D'Hubert glanced over his shoulder. Lieutenant Feraud had opened his eyes. He did not move. Like a man just waking from a deep sleep he stared without any expression at the evening sky.

Lieutenant D'Hubert's urgent shouts to the old gardener produced no effect—not so much as to make him shut his toothless mouth. Then he remembered that the man was stone deaf. All that time the girl struggled, not with maidenly coyness, but like a pretty dumb fury, kicking his shins now and then. He continued to hold her as if in a vise, his instinct telling him that were he to let her go she would fly at his eyes. But he was greatly humiliated by his position. At last she gave up. She was more exhausted than appeased he feared. Nevertheless, he attempted to get out of this wicked dream by way of negotiation.

"Listen to me," he said, as calmly as he could. "Will you promise to run for a surgeon if I let you go?"

With real affliction he heard her declare that she would do nothing of the kind. On the contrary, her sobbed-out intention was to remain in the garden, and fight tooth and nail for the protection of the vanquished man. This was shocking.

"My dear child!" he cried in despair, "is it possible that you think me capable of murdering a wounded adversary? Is it . . . Be quiet, you little wildcat, you!"

They struggled. A thick, drowsy voice said behind him, "What are you after with that girl?"

Lieutenant Feraud had raised himself on his good arm. He was looking sleepily at his other arm, at the mess of blood on his uniform, at a small red pool on the ground, at his sabre lying a foot away on the path. Then he laid himself down gently again to think it all out, as far as a thundering headache would permit of mental operations.

Lieutenant D'Hubert released the girl, who crouched at once by the side of the other lieutenant. The shades of night were falling on the little trim garden with this touching group, whence proceeded low murmurs of sorrow and compassion, with other feeble sounds of a different character, as if an imperfectly awake invalid were trying to swear. Lieutenant D'Hubert went away.

He passed through the silent house, and congratulated himself upon the dusk concealing his gory

hands and scratched face from the passers-by. But this story could by no means be concealed. He dreaded the discredit and ridicule above everything, and was painfully aware of sneaking through the back streets in the manner of a murderer. Presently the sounds of a flute coming out of the open window of a lighted upstairs room in a modest house interrupted his dismal reflections. It was being played with a persevering virtuosity, and through the *floritures* of the tune one could hear the regular thumping of the foot beating time on the floor.

Lieutenant D'Hubert shouted a name, which was that of an army surgeon whom he knew fairly well. The sounds of the flute ceased, and the musician appeared at the window, his instrument still in his hand, peering into the street.

"Who calls? You, D'Hubert? What brings you this way?"

He did not like to be disturbed at the hour when he was playing the flute. He was a man whose hair had turned gray already in the thankless task of tying up wounds on battlefields where others reaped advancement and glory.

"I want you to go at once and see Feraud. You know Lieutenant Feraud. He lives down the second street. It's but a step from here."

"What's the matter with him?"

"Wounded."

"Are you sure?"

"Sure!" cried D'Hubert. "I come from there."

"That's amusing," said the elderly surgeon. Amusing was his favorite word; but the expression

of his face when he pronounced it never corresponded. He was a stolid man. "Come in," he added. "I'll get ready in a moment."

"Thanks! I will. I want to wash my hands in your room."

Lieutenant D'Hubert found the surgeon occupied in unscrewing his flute, and packing the pieces methodically in a case. He turned his head.

"Water there—in the corner. Your hands do want washing."

"I've stopped the bleeding," said Lieutenant D'Hubert. "But you had better make haste. It's rather more than ten minutes ago, you know."

The surgeon did not hurry his movements.

"What's the matter? Dressing came off? That's amusing. I've been at work in the hospital all day, but I've been told this morning by somebody that he had come off without a scratch."

"Not the same duel probably," growled moodily Lieutenant D'Hubert, wiping his hands on a coarse towel.

"Not the same. . . . What? Another. It would take the very devil to make me go out twice in one day." The surgeon looked narrowly at Lieutenant D'Hubert. "How did you come by that scratched face? Both sides, too—and symmetrical. It's amusing."

"Very!" snarled Lieutenant D'Hubert. "And you will find his slashed arm amusing, too. It will keep both of you amused for quite a long time."

The doctor was mystified and impressed by the brusque bitterness of Lieutenant D'Hubert's tone.

They left the house together, and in the street he was still more mystified by his conduct.

"Aren't you coming with me?" he asked.

"No," said Lieutenant D'Hubert. "You can find the house by yourself. The front door will be standing open very likely."

"All right. Where's his room?"

"Ground floor. But you had better go right through and look in the garden first."

This astonishing piece of information made the surgeon go off without further parley. Lieutenant D'Hubert regained his quarters nursing a hot and uneasy indignation. He dreaded the chaff of his comrades almost as much as the anger of his superiors. The truth was confoundingly grotesque and embarrassing, even putting aside the irregularity of the combat itself, which made it come abominably near a criminal offence. Like all men without imagination, a faculty which helps the processes of reflective thought, Lieutenant D'Hubert became frightfully harassed by the obvious aspects of his predicament. He was certainly glad that he had not killed Lieutenant Feraud outside all rules, and without the regular witnesses proper to such a transaction. Uncommonly glad. At the same time he felt as though he would have liked to wring his neck for him without ceremony.

He was still under the sway of these contradictory sentiments when the surgeon amateur of the flute came to see him. More than three days had elapsed. Lieutenant D'Hubert was no longer *officier d'ordonnance* to the General commanding the division. He had been sent back to his regiment.

And he was resuming his connection with the soldiers' military family by being shut up in close confinement, not at his own quarters in town, but in a room in the barracks. Owing to the gravity of the incident, he was forbidden to see any one. He did not know what had happened, what was being said, or what was being thought. The arrival of the surgeon was a most unexpected thing to the worried captive. The amateur of the flute began by explaining that he was there only by a special favor of the colonel.

"I represented to him that it would be only fair to let you have some authentic news of your adversary," he continued. "You'll be glad to hear he's getting better fast."

Lieutenant D'Hubert's face exhibited no conventional signs of gladness. He continued to walk the floor of the dusty bare room.

"Take this chair, Doctor," he mumbled.

The doctor sat down.

"This affair is variously appreciated—in town and in the army. In fact, the diversity of opinions is amusing."

"Is it?" mumbled Lieutenant D'Hubert, tramping steadily from wall to wall. But within himself he marveled that there could be two opinions on the matter. The surgeon continued:

"Of course, as the real facts are not known——"

"I should have thought," interrupted D'Hubert, "that the fellow would have put you in possession of the facts."

"He said something," admitted the other, "the first time I saw him. And, by the by, I did find him

in the garden. The thump on the back of his head had made him a little incoherent then. Afterward he was rather reticent than otherwise."

"Didn't think he would have the grace to be ashamed!" mumbled D'Hubert, resuming his pacing, while the doctor murmured: "It's very amusing. Ashamed! Shame was not exactly his frame of mind. However, you may look at the matter otherwise."

"What are you talking about? What matter?" asked D'Hubert, with a sidelong look at the heavy-faced, gray-haired figure seated on a wooden chair.

"Whatever it is," said the surgeon a little impatiently. "I don't want to pronounce any opinion on your conduct——"

"By heavens, you had better not!" burst out D'Hubert.

"There!—there! Don't be so quick in flourishing the sword. It doesn't pay in the long run. Understand once for all that I would not carve any of you youngsters except with the tools of my trade. But my advice is good. If you go on like this you will make for yourself an ugly reputation."

"Go on like what?" demanded Lieutenant D'Hubert, stopping short, quite startled. "I!—I!—make for myself a reputation. . . . What do you imagine?"

"I told you I don't wish to judge of the rights and wrongs of this incident. It's not my business. Nevertheless——"

"What on earth has he been telling you?" interrupted Lieutenant D'Hubert, in a sort of awed **scare.**

"I told you already, that at first, when I picked him up in the garden, he was incoherent. Afterward he was naturally reticent. But I gather at least that he could not help himself."

"He couldn't?" shouted Lieutenant D'Hubert in a great voice. Then, lowering his tone impressively, "And what about me? Could I help myself?"

The surgeon stood up. His thoughts were running upon the flute, his constant companion with a consoling voice. In the vicinity of field ambulances, after twenty-four hours' hard work, he had been known to trouble with its sweet sounds the horrible stillness of battlefields given over to silence and the dead. The solacing hour of his daily life was approaching, and in peace time he held on to the minutes as a miser to his hoard.

"Of course!—of course!" he said perfunctorily. "You would think so. It's amusing. However, being perfectly neutral and friendly to you both, I have consented to deliver his message to you. Say that I am humoring an invalid if you like. He wants you to know that this affair is by no means at an end. He intends to send you his seconds directly he has regained his strength—providing, of course, the army is not in the field at that time."

"He intends, does he? Why, certainly," spluttered Lieutenant D'Hubert in a passion.

The secret of his exasperation was not apparent to the visitor; but this passion confirmed the surgeon in the belief which was gaining ground outside that some very serious difference had arisen between these two young men, something serious enough to

wear an air of mystery, some fact of the utmost gravity. To settle their urgent difference about that fact, those two young men had risked being broken and disgraced at the outset almost of their career. The surgeon feared that the forthcoming inquiry would fail to satisfy the public curiosity. They would not take the public into their confidence as to that something which had passed between them of a nature so outrageous as to make them face a charge of murder—neither more nor less. But what could it be?

The surgeon was not very curious by temperament; but that question haunting his mind caused him twice that evening to hold the instrument off his lips and sit silent for a whole minute—right in the middle of a tune—trying to form a plausible conjecture.



II

HE succeeded in this object no better than the rest of the garrison and the whole of society. The two young officers, of no especial consequence till then, became distinguished by the universal curiosity as to the origin of their quarrel. Madame de Lionne's *salon* was the centre of ingenious surmises; that lady herself was for a time assailed by inquiries as being the last person known to have spoken to these unhappy and reckless young men before they went out together from her house to a savage encounter with swords, at dusk, in a private garden. She protested she had not observed anything unusual in their demeanor. Lieutenant Feraud had been visibly annoyed at being called away. That was natural enough; no man likes to be disturbed in a conversation with a lady famed for her elegance and sensibility. But in truth the subject bored Madame de Lionne, since her personality could by no stretch of reckless gossip be connected with this affair. And it irritated her to hear it advanced that there might have been some woman in the case. This irritation arose, not from her elegance or sensibility, but from a more instinctive side of her nature. It became so great at last that she peremptorily forbade the subject to be mentioned under her roof. Near her couch the prohibition was obeyed, but farther off in the *salon* the pall of

the imposed silence continued to be lifted more or less. A personage with a long, pale face, resembling the countenance of a sheep, opined, shaking his head, that it was a quarrel of long standing envenomed by time. It was objected to him that the men themselves were too young for such a theory. They belonged also to different and distant parts of France. There were other physical impossibilities, too. A sub-commissary of the Intendence, an agreeable and cultivated bachelor in kerseymere breeches, Hessian boots, and a blue coat embroidered with silver lace, who affected to believe in the transmigration of souls, suggested that the two had met perhaps in some previous existence. The feud was in the forgotten past. It might have been something quite inconceivable in the present state of their being; but their souls remembered the animosity, and manifested an instinctive antagonism. He developed this theme jocularly. Yet the affair was so absurd from the worldly, the military, the honorable, or the prudential point of view, that this weird explanation seemed rather more reasonable than any other.

The two officers had confided nothing definite to any one. Humiliation at having been worsted arms in hand, and an uneasy feeling of having been involved in a scrape by the injustice of fate, kept Lieutenant Feraud savagely dumb. He mistrusted the sympathy of mankind. That would, of course, go to that dandified staff officer. Lying in bed, he raved aloud to the pretty maid who administered to his needs with devotion, and listened to his horrible imprecations with alarm. That Lieutenant D'Hu-

bert should be made to "pay for it," seemed to her just and natural. Her principal care was that Lieutenant Feraud should not excite himself. He appeared so wholly admirable and fascinating to the humility of her heart that her only concern was to see him get well quickly, even if it were only to resume his visits to Madame de Lionne's *salon*.

Lieutenant D'Hubert kept silent for the immediate reason that there was no one, except a stupid young soldier servant, to speak to. Further, he was aware that the episode, so grave professionally, had its comic side. When reflecting upon it, he still felt that he would like to wring Lieutenant Feraud's neck for him. But this formula was figurative rather than precise, and expressed more a state of mind than an actual physical impulse. At the same time, there was in that young man a feeling of comradeship and kindness which made him unwilling to make the position of Lieutenant Feraud worse than it was. He did not want to talk at large about this wretched affair. At the inquiry he would have, of course, to speak the truth in self-defence. This prospect vexed him.

But no inquiry took place. The army took the field instead. Lieutenant D'Hubert, liberated without remark, took up his regimental duties; and Lieutenant Feraud, his arm just out of the sling, rode unquestioned with his squadron to complete his convalescence in the smoke of battlefields and the fresh air of night bivouacs. This bracing treatment suited him so well that at the first rumor of an armistice being signed he could turn without misgivings to the thoughts of his private warfare.

This time it was to be regular warfare. He sent two friends to Lieutenant D'Hubert, whose regiment was stationed only a few miles away. Those friends had asked no questions of their principal. "I owe him one, that pretty staff officer," he had said grimly, and they went away quite contentedly on their mission. Lieutenant D'Hubert had no difficulty in finding two friends equally discreet and devoted to their principal. "There's a crazy fellow to whom I must give a lesson," he had declared curtly; and they asked for no better reasons.

On these grounds an encounter with duelling-swords was arranged one early morning in a convenient field. At the third set-to Lieutenant D'Hubert found himself lying on his back on the dewy grass with a hole in his side. A serene sun rising over a landscape of meadows and woods hung on his left. A surgeon—not the flute player, but another—was bending over him, feeling around the wound.

"Narrow squeak. But it will be nothing," he pronounced.

Lieutenant D'Hubert heard these words with pleasure. One of his seconds, sitting on the wet grass, and sustaining his head on his lap, said, "The fortune of war, *mon pauvre vieux*. What will you have? You had better make it up like two good fellows. Do!"

"You don't know what you ask," murmured Lieutenant D'Hubert, in a feeble voice. "However if he . . ."

In another part of the meadow the seconds of

Lieutenant Feraud were urging him to go over and shake hands with his adversary.

"You have paid him off now—*que diable*. It's the proper thing to do. This D'Hubert is a decent fellow."

"I know the decency of these generals' pets," muttered Lieutenant Feraud through his teeth, and the sombre expression of his face discouraged further efforts at reconciliation. The seconds, bowing from a distance, took their men off the field. In the afternoon Lieutenant D'Hubert, very popular as a good comrade uniting great bravery with a frank and equable temper, had many visitors. It was remarked that Lieutenant Feraud did not, as is customary, show himself much abroad to receive the felicitations of his friends. They would not have failed him, because he, too, was liked for the exuberance of his southern nature and the simplicity of his character. In all the places where officers were in the habit of assembling at the end of the day, the duel of the morning was talked over from every point of view. Though Lieutenant D'Hubert had got worsted this time, his sword play was commended. No one could deny that it was very close, very scientific. It was even whispered that if he got touched it was because he wished to spare his adversary. But by many the vigor and dash of Lieutenant Feraud's attack were pronounced irresistible.

The merits of the two officers as combatants were frankly discussed; but their attitude to each other after the duel was criticised lightly and with caution. It was irreconcilable, and that was to be regretted. But after all they knew best what the care

of their honor dictated. It was not a matter for their comrades to pry into over-much. As to the origin of the quarrel, the general impression was that it dated from the time they were holding garrison in Strasbourg. The musical surgeon shook his head at that. It went much farther back, he thought.

"Why, of course! You must know the whole story," cried several voices, eager with curiosity. "What was it?"

He raised his eyes from his glass deliberately. "Even if I knew ever so well, you can't expect me to tell you, since both the principals choose to say nothing."

He got up and went out, leaving the sense of mystery behind him. He could not stay any longer, because the witching hour of flute-playing was drawing near.

After he had gone a very young officer observed solemnly, "Obviously! His lips are sealed."

Nobody questioned the high correctness of that remark. Somehow it added to the impressiveness of the affair. Several older officers of both regiments, prompted by nothing but sheer kindness and love of harmony, proposed to form a Court of Honor, to which the two young men would leave the task of their reconciliation. Unfortunately, they began by approaching Lieutenant Feraud, on the assumption that, having just scored heavily, he would be found placable and disposed to moderation.

The reasoning was sound enough. Nevertheless, the move turned out unfortunate. In that relaxa-

tion of moral fibre, which is brought about by the ease of soothed vanity, Lieutenant Feraud had condescended in the secret of his heart to review the case, and even had come to doubt not the justice of his cause, but the absolute sagacity of his conduct. This being so, he was disinclined to talk about it. The suggestion of the regimental wise men put him in a difficult position. He was disgusted at it, and this disgust, by a paradoxical logic, reawakened his animosity against Lieutenant D'Hubert. Was he to be pestered by this fellow forever—the fellow who had an infernal knack of getting round people somehow? And yet it was difficult to refuse point blank that mediation sanctioned by the code of honor.

He met the difficulty by an attitude of grim reserve. He twisted his moustache and used vague words. His case was perfectly clear. He was not ashamed to state it before a proper Court of Honor, neither was he afraid to defend it on the ground. He did not see any reason to jump at the suggestion before ascertaining how his adversary was likely to take it.

Later in the day, his exasperation growing upon him, he was heard in a public place saying sardonically, "that it would be the very luckiest thing for Lieutenant D'Hubert, because the next time of meeting he need not hope to get off with the mere trifle of three weeks in bed."

This boastful phrase might have been prompted by the most profound Machiavellism. Southern natures often hide, under the outward impulsiveness of action and speech, a certain amount of astuteness.

Lieutenant Feraud, mistrusting the justice of men, by no means desired a Court of Honor; and the above words, according so well with his temperaments, had also the merit of serving his turn. Whether meant so or not, they found their way in less than four-and-twenty hours into Lieutenant D'Hubert's bedroom. In consequence Lieutenant D'Hubert, sitting propped up with pillows, received the overtures made to him next day by the statement that the affair was of a nature which could not bear discussion.

The pale face of the wounded officer, his weak voice, which he had yet to use cautiously, and the courteous dignity of his tone had a great effect on his hearers. Reported outside, all this did more for deepening the mystery than the vaporings of Lieutenant Feraud. This last was greatly relieved at the issue. He began to enjoy the state of general wonder, and was pleased to add to it by assuming an attitude of fierce discretion.

The colonel of Lieutenant D'Hubert's regiment was a gray-haired, weather-beaten warrior, who took a simple view of his responsibilities. "I can't," he said to himself, "let the best of my subalterns get damaged like this for nothing. I must get to the bottom of this affair privately. He must speak out if the devil were in it. The colonel should be more than a father to these youngsters." And indeed he loved all his men with as much affection as a father of a large family can feel for every individual member of it. If human beings by an oversight of Providence came into the world as mere civilians, they were born again into a regiment

as infants are born into a family, and it was that military birth alone which counted.

At the sight of Lieutenant D'Hubert standing before him very bleached and hollow-eyed the heart of the old warrior felt a pang of genuine compassion. All his affection for the regiment—that body of men which he held in his hand to launch forward and draw back, who ministered to his pride and commanded all his thoughts—seemed centred for a moment on the person of the most promising subaltern. He cleared his throat in a threatening manner, and frowned terribly. “You must understand,” he began, “that I don’t care a rap for the life of a single man in the regiment. I would send the eight hundred and forty-three of you men and horses galloping into the pit of perdition with no more compunction than I would kill a fly!”

“Yes, Colonel. You would be riding at our head,” said Lieutenant D'Hubert with a wan smile.

The colonel, who felt the need of being very diplomatic, fairly roared at this. “I want you to know, Lieutenant D'Hubert, that I could stand aside and see you all riding to Hades if need be. I am a man to do even that if the good of the service and my duty to my country required it from me. But that’s unthinkable, so don’t you even hint at such a thing.” He glared awfully, but his tone softened. “There’s some milk yet about that moustache of yours, my boy. You don’t know what a man like me is capable of. I would hide behind a haystack if . . . Don’t grin at me, sir! How dare you? If this were not a private conversation, I would . . . Look here! I am responsible for,

the proper expenditure of lives under my command for the glory of our country and the honor of the regiment. Do you understand that? Well, then, what the devil do you mean by letting yourself be spitted like this by that fellow of the Seventh Hussars? It's simply disgraceful!"

Lieutenant D'Hubert felt vexed beyond measure. His shoulders moved slightly. He made no other answer. He could not ignore his responsibility.

The colonel veiled his glance and lowered his voice still more. "It's deplorable!" he murmured. And again he changed his tone. "Come!" he went on persuasively, but with that note of authority which dwells in the throat of a good leader of men, "this affair must be settled. I desire to be told plainly what it is all about. I demand, as your best friend, to know."

The compelling power of authority, the persuasive influence of kindness, affected powerfully a man just risen from a bed of sickness. Lieutenant D'Hubert's hand, which grasped the knob of a stick, trembled slightly. But his northern temperament, sentimental yet cautious, and clear-sighted, too, in its idealistic way, checked his impulse to make a clean breast of the whole deadly absurdity. According to the precept of transcendental wisdom, he turned his tongue seven times in his mouth before he spoke. He made then only a speech of thanks.

The colonel listened, interested at first, then looked mystified. At last he frowned. "You hesitate?—*mille tonnerres!* Haven't I told you that I will condescend to argue with you—as a friend?"

"Yes, Colonel!" answered Lieutenant D'Hubert

gently. "But I am afraid that after you have heard me out as a friend you will take action as my superior officer."

The attentive colonel snapped his jaws. "Well, what of that?" he said frankly. "Is it so damnable disgraceful?"

"It is not," negatived Lieutenant D'Hubert, in a faint but firm voice.

"Of course I shall act for the good of the service. Nothing can prevent me doing that. What do you think I want to be told for?"

"I know it is not from idle curiosity," protested Lieutenant D'Hubert. "I know you will act wisely. But what about the good fame of the regiment?"

"It cannot be affected by any youthful folly of a lieutenant," said the colonel severely.

"No. It cannot be. But it can be by evil tongues. It will be said that a lieutenant of the Fourth Hussars, afraid of meeting his adversary, is hiding behind his colonel. And that would be worse than hiding behind a haystack—for the good of the service. I cannot afford to do that, Colonel."

"Nobody would dare to say anything of the kind," began the colonel very fiercely, but ended the phrase on an uncertain note. The bravery of Lieutenant D'Hubert was well known. But the colonel was well aware that the duelling courage, the single combat courage, is rightly or wrongly supposed to be courage of a special sort. And it was eminently necessary that an officer of his regiment should possess every kind of courage—and prove it, too. The colonel stuck out his lower lip, and looked far away

with a peculiar glazed stare. This was the expression of his perplexity—an expression practically unknown in his regiment; for perplexity is a sentiment which is incompatible with the rank of colonel of cavalry. The colonel himself was overcome by the unpleasant novelty of the sensation. As he was not accustomed to think except on professional matters connected with the welfare of men and horses, and the proper use thereof on the field of glory, his intellectual efforts degenerated into mere mental repetitions of profane language. "*Mille tonnerres! . . . Sacré nom de nom . . .*" he thought.

Lieutenant D'Hubert coughed painfully, and added in a weary voice: "There will be plenty of evil tongues to say that I've been cowed. And I am sure you will not expect me to pass that over. I may find myself suddenly with a dozen duels on my hands instead of this one affair."

The direct simplicity of this argument came home to the colonel's understanding. He looked at his subordinate fixedly. "Sit down, Lieutenant!" he said gruffly. "This is the very devil of a . . . Sit down!"

"*Mon Colonel,*" D'Hubert began again, "I am not afraid of evil tongues. There's a way of silencing them. But there's my peace of mind, too. I wouldn't be able to shake off the notion that I've ruined a brother officer. Whatever action you take, it is bound to go farther. The inquiry has been dropped—let it rest now. It would have been absolutely fatal to Feraud."

"Hey! What! Did he behave so badly?"

"Yes. It was pretty bad," muttered Lieutenant

D'Hubert. Being still very weak, he felt a disposition to cry.

As the other man did not belong to his own regiment, the colonel had no difficulty in believing this. He began to pace up and down the room. He was a good chief, a man capable of discreet sympathy. But he was human in other ways, too, and this became apparent because he was not capable of artifice.

"The very devil, Lieutenant," he blurted out, in the innocence of his heart, "is that I have declared my intention to get to the bottom of this affair. And when a colonel says something . . . You see . . ."

Lieutenant D'Hubert broke in earnestly: "Let me entreat you, Colonel, to be satisfied with taking my word of honor that I was put into a damnable position where I had no option; I had no choice whatever, consistent with my dignity as a man and an officer. . . . After all, Colonel, this fact is the very bottom of this affair. Here you've got it. The rest is mere detail. . . ."

The colonel stopped short. The reputation of Lieutenant D'Hubert for good sense and good temper weighed in the balance. A cool head, a warm heart, open as the day. Always correct in his behavior. One had to trust him. The colonel repressed manfully an immense curiosity. "H'm! You affirm that as a man and an officer. . . . No option? Eh?"

"As an officer—an officer of the Fourth Hussars, too," insisted Lieutenant D'Hubert, "I had not. And that is the bottom of the affair, Colonel."

"Yes. But still I don't see why, to one's colonel.
. . . A colonel is a father—*que diable!*"

Lieutenant D'Hubert ought not to have been allowed out as yet. He was becoming aware of his physical insufficiency with humiliation and despair. But the morbid obstinacy of an invalid possessed him, and at the same time he felt with dismay his eyes filling with water. This trouble seemed too big to handle. A tear fell down the thin pale cheek of Lieutenant D'Hubert.

The colonel turned his back on him hastily. You could have heard a pin drop. "This is some silly woman story—is it not?"

Saying these words the chief spun round to seize the truth, which is not a beautiful shape living in a well, but a shy bird best caught by stratagem. This was the last move of the colonel's diplomacy. He saw the truth shining unmistakably in the gesture of Lieutenant D'Hubert raising his weak arms and his eyes to heaven in supreme protest.

"Not a woman affair—eh?" growled the colonel, staring hard. "I don't ask you who or where. All I want to know is whether there is a woman in it?"

Lieutenant D'Hubert's arms dropped, and his weak voice was pathetically broken.

"Nothing of the kind, *mon Colonel.*"

"On your honor?" insisted the old warrior.

"On my honor."

"Very well," said the colonel thoughtfully, and bit his lip. The arguments of Lieutenant D'Hubert, helped by his liking for the man, had convinced him. On the other hand, it was highly improper that his intervention, of which he had made no

secret, should produce no visible effect. He kept Lieutenant D'Hubert a few minutes longer, and dismissed him kindly.

"Take a few days more in bed, Lieutenant. What the devil does the surgeon mean by reporting you fit for duty?"

On coming out of the colonel's quarters, Lieutenant D'Hubert said nothing to the friend who was waiting outside to take him home. He said nothing to anybody. Lieutenant D'Hubert made no confidences. But on the evening of that day the colonel, strolling under the elms growing near his quarters, in the company of his second in command, opened his lips.

"I've got to the bottom of this affair," he remarked.

The lieutenant-colonel, a dry, brown chip of a man with short side-whiskers, pricked up his ears at that without letting a sign of curiosity escape him.

"It's no trifle," added the colonel oracularly. The other waited for a long while before he murmured:

"Indeed, sir!"

"No trifle," repeated the colonel, looking straight before him. "I've however forbidden D'Hubert either to send to or receive a challenge from Feraud for the next twelve months."

He had imagined this prohibition to save the prestige a colonel should have. The result of it was to give an official seal to the mystery surrounding this deadly quarrel. Lieutenant D'Hubert repelled by an impassive silence all attempts to worm the truth out of him. Lieutenant Feraud, secretly

uneasy at first, regained his assurance as time went on. He disguised his ignorance of the meaning of the imposed truce by slight, sardonic laughs, as though he were amused by what he intended to keep to himself. "But what will you do?" his chums used to ask him. He contented himself by replying: "*Qui vivra verra*" with a little truculent air. And everybody admired his discretion.

Before the end of the truce Lieutenant D'Hubert got his troop. The promotion was well earned, but somehow no one seemed to expect the event. When Lieutenant Feraud heard of it at a gathering of officers, he muttered through his teeth, "Is that so?" At once he unhooked his sabre from a peg near the door, buckled it on carefully, and left the company without another word. He walked home with measured steps, struck a light with his flint and steel, and lit his tallow candle. Then snatching an unlucky glass tumbler off the mantel-piece, he dashed it violently on the floor.

Now that D'Hubert was an officer of superior rank there could be no question of a duel. Neither of them could send or receive a challenge without rendering himself amenable to a court-martial. It was not to be thought of. Lieutenant Feraud, who for many days now had experienced no real desire to meet Lieutenant D'Hubert arms in hand, chafed again at the systematic injustice of fate. "Does he think he will escape me in that way?" he thought indignantly. He saw in this promotion an intrigue, a conspiracy, a cowardly manœuvre. That colonel knew what he was doing. He had hastened to recommend his favorite for a step. It was out-

rageous that a man should be able to avoid the consequences of his acts in such a lark and tortuous manner.

Of a happy-go-lucky disposition, of a temperament more pugnacious than military, Lieutenant Feraud had been content to give and receive blows for sheer love of armed strife, and without much thought of advancement; but now an urgent desire to get on sprang up in his breast. This fighter by vocation resolved in his mind to seize showy occasions and to court the favorable opinion of his chiefs like a mere worldling. He knew he was as brave as any one, and never doubted his personal charm. Nevertheless, neither the bravery nor the charm seemed to work very swiftly. Lieutenant Feraud's engaging, careless truculence of a *beau sabreur* underwent a change. He began to make bitter allusions to "clever fellows who stick at nothing to get on." The army was full of them, he would say; you had only to look round. But all the time he had in view one person only, his adversary, D'Hubert. Once he confided to an appreciative friend: "You see, I don't know how to fawn on the right side of people. It isn't in my character."

He did not get his step till a week after Austerlitz. The Light Cavalry of the Grand Army had its hands very full of interesting work for a little while. Directly the pressure of professional occupation had been eased, Captain Feraud took measures to arrange a meeting without loss of time. "I know my bird," he observed grimly. "If I don't look sharp he will take care to get himself promoted over the heads of a dozen better men

than himself. He's got the knack for that sort of thing."

This duel was fought in Silesia. If not fought to a finish, it was, at any rate, fought to a standstill. The weapon was the cavalry sabre, and the skill, the science, the vigor, and the determination displayed by the adversaries compelled the admiration of the beholders. It became the subject of talk on both shores of the Danube, and as far as the garrisons of Gratz and Laybach. They crossed blades seven times. Both had many cuts which bled profusely. Both refused to have the combat stopped, time after time, with what appeared the most deadly animosity. This appearance was caused on the part of Captain D'Hubert by a rational desire to be done once for all with this worry; on the part of Captain Feraud by a tremendous exaltation of his pugnacious instincts and the incitement of wounded vanity. At last, dishevelled, their shirts in rags, covered with gore, and hardly able to stand, they were led away forcibly by their marvelling and horrified seconds. Later on, besieged by comrades avid of details, these gentlemen declared that they could not have allowed that sort of hacking to go on indefinitely. Asked whether the quarrel was settled this time, they gave it out as their conviction that it was a difference which could only be settled by one of the parties remaining lifeless on the ground. The sensation spread from army corps to army corps, and penetrated at last to the smallest detachments of the troops cantoned between the Rhine and the Save. In the cafés in Vienna it was generally estimated, from details to hand, that the adversaries would be,

able to meet again in three weeks' time on the outside. Something really transcendent in the way of duelling was expected.

These expectations were brought to nought by the necessities of the service which separated the two officers. No official notice had been taken of their quarrel. It was now the property of the army, and not to be meddled with lightly. But the story of the duel, or rather their duelling propensities, must have stood somewhat in the way of their advancement, because they were still captains when they came together again during the war with Prussia. Detached north after Jena, with the army commanded by Marshal Bernadotte, Prince of Ponte Corvo, they entered Lübeck together.

It was only after the occupation of that town that Captain Feraud found leisure to consider his future conduct in view of the fact that Captain D'Hubert had been given the position of third aide-de-camp to the marshal. He considered it a great part of a night, and in the morning summoned two sympathetic friends.

"I've been thinking it over calmly," he said, gazing at them with bloodshot, tired eyes. "I see that I must get rid of that intriguing personage. Here he's managed to sneak on to the personal staff of the marshal. It's a direct provocation to me. I can't tolerate a situation in which I am exposed any day to receive an order through him. And God knows what order, too! That sort of thing has happened once before—and that's once too often. He understands this perfectly, never fear. I can't tell you any more. Now you know what it is you have to do."

This encounter took place outside the town of Lübeck, on very open ground, selected with special care in deference to the general sentiment of the cavalry division belonging to the army corps, that this time the two officers should meet on horseback. After all, this duel was a cavalry affair, and to persist in fighting on foot would look like a slight on one's own arm of the service. The seconds, startled by the unusual nature of the suggestion, hastened to refer to their principals. Captain Feraud jumped at it with alacrity. For some obscure reason, depending, no doubt, on his psychology, he imagined himself invincible on horseback. All alone within the four walls of his room he rubbed his hands and muttered triumphantly: "Aha! my pretty staff officer, I've got you now."

Captain D'Hubert on his side, after staring hard for a considerable time at his friends, shrugged his shoulders slightly. This affair had hopelessly and unreasonably complicated his existence for him. One absurdity more or less in the development did not matter—all absurdity was distasteful to him; but, urbane as ever, he produced a faintly ironic smile, and said in his calm voice: "It certainly will do away to some extent with the monotony of the thing."

When left alone, he sat down at a table and took his head into his hands. He had not spared himself of late, and the marshal had been working all his aides-de-camp particularly hard. The last three weeks of campaigning in horrible weather had affected his health. When overtired he suffered from a stitch in his wounded side, and that uncomforta-

ble sensation always depressed him. "It's that brute's doing, too," he thought bitterly.

The day before he had received a letter from home, announcing that his only sister was going to be married. He reflected that from the time she was nineteen and he twenty-six, when he went away to garrison life in Strasbourg, he had had but two short glimpses of her. They had been great friends and confidants; and now she was going to be given away to a man whom he did not know—a very worthy fellow no doubt, but not half good enough for her. He would never see his old Léonie again. She had a capable little head, and plenty of tact; she would know how to manage the fellow, to be sure. He was easy in his mind about her happiness, but he felt ousted from the first place in her thoughts, which had been his ever since the girl could speak. A melancholy regret of the days of his childhood settled upon Captain D'Hubert, third aide-de-camp to the Prince of Ponte Corvo.

He threw aside the letter of congratulation he had begun to write as in duty bound, but without enthusiasm. He took a fresh piece of paper, and traced on it the words: "This is my last will and testament." Looking at these words, he gave himself up to unpleasant reflection; a presentiment that he would never see the scenes of his childhood weighed down the equable spirits of Captain D'Hubert. He jumped up, pushing his chair back, yawned elaborately in sign that he didn't care anything for presentiments, and throwing himself on the bed went to sleep. During the night he shivered from time to time without waking up. In the

morning he rode out of town between his two seconds, talking of indifferent things, and looking right and left with apparent detachment into the heavy morning mists shrouding the flat green fields bordered by hedges. He leaped a ditch, and saw the forms of many mounted men moving in the fog. "We are to fight before a gallery, it seems," he muttered to himself bitterly.

His seconds were rather concerned at the state of the atmosphere, but presently a pale, sickly sun struggled out of the low vapors, and Captain D'Hubert made out, in the distance, three horsemen riding a little apart from the others. It was Captain Feraud and his seconds. He drew his sabre, and assured himself that it was properly fastened to his wrist. And now the seconds, who had been standing in close group with the heads of their horses together, separated at an easy canter, leaving a large clear field between him and his adversary. Captain D'Hubert looked at the pale sun, at the dismal fields, and the imbecility of the impending fight filled him with desolation. From a distant part of the field a stentorian voice shouted commands at proper intervals: *Au pas—Au trot—Charrргеz!* . . . Presentiments of death don't come to a man for nothing, he thought at the very moment he put spurs to his horse.

And therefore he was more than surprised when, at the very first set-to, Captain Feraud laid himself open to a cut over the forehead, which, blinding him with blood, ended the combat almost before it had fairly begun. It was impossible to go on, Captain D'Hubert, leaving his enemy swearing hor-

ribly and reeling in the saddle between his two appalled friends, leaped the ditch again into the road and trotted home with his two seconds, who seemed rather awestruck at the speedy issue of that encounter. In the evening Captain D'Hubert finished the congratulatory letter on his sister's marriage.

He finished it late. It was a long letter. Captain D'Hubert gave reins to his fancy. He told his sister that he would feel rather lonely after this great change in her life; but then the day would come for him, too, to get married. In fact, he was thinking already of the time when there would be no one left to fight with in Europe, and the epoch of wars would be over. "I expect then," he wrote, "to be within measurable distance of a marshal's baton, and you will be an experienced married woman. You shall look out a wife for me. I will be, probably, bald by then, and a little *blasé*. I shall require a young girl, pretty of course, and with a large fortune, which should help me to close my glorious career in the splendor befitting my exalted rank." He ended with the information that he had just given a lesson to a worrying, quarrelsome fellow who imagined he had a grievance against him. "But if you, in the depths of your province," he continued, "ever hear it said that your brother is of a quarrelsome disposition, don't you believe it on any account. There is no saying what gossip from the army may reach your innocent ears. Whatever you hear you may rest assured that your ever-loving brother is not a duellist." Then Captain D'Hubert crumpled up the blank sheet of paper headed

with the words "This is my last will and testament," and threw it in the fire with a great laugh at himself. He didn't care a snap for what that lunatic could do. He had suddenly acquired the conviction that his adversary was utterly powerless to affect his life in any sort of way; except, perhaps, in the way of putting a special excitement into the delightful, gay intervals between the campaigns.

From this on there were, however, to be no peaceful intervals in the career of Captain D'Hubert. He saw the fields of Eylau and Friedland, marched and countermarched in the snow, in the mud, in the dust of Polish plains, picking up distinction and advancement on all the roads of Northeastern Europe. Meantime Captain Feraud, dispatched southward with his regiment, made unsatisfactory war in Spain. It was only when the preparations for the Russian campaign began that he was ordered north again. He left the country of mantillas and oranges without regret.

The first signs of a not unbecoming baldness added to the lofty aspect of Colonel D'Hubert's forehead. This feature was no longer white and smooth as in the days of his youth; the kindly open glance of his blue eyes had grown a little hard as if from much peering through the smoke of battles. The ebony crop on Colonel Feraud's head, coarse and crinkly like a cap of horsehair, showed many silver threads about the temples. A detestable warfare of ambushes and inglorious surprises had not improved his temper. The beaklike curve of his nose was unpleasantly set off by a deep fold on each side of his mouth. The round orbits of his eyes

radiated wrinkles. More than ever he recalled an irritable and staring bird—something like a cross between a parrot and an owl. He was still extremely outspoken in his dislike of “intriguing fellows.” He seized every opportunity to state that he did not pick up his rank in the ante-rooms of marshals. The unlucky persons, civil or military, who, with an intention of being pleasant, begged Colonel Feraud to tell them how he came by that very apparent scar on the forehead, were astonished to find themselves snubbed in various ways, some of which were simply rude and others mysteriously sardonic. Young officers were warned kindly by their more experienced comrades not to stare openly at the colonel’s scar. But indeed an officer need have been very young in his profession not to have heard the legendary tale of that duel originating in a mysterious, unforgivable offence.



III

THE retreat from Moscow submerged all private feeling in a sea of disaster and misery. Colonels without regiments, D'Hubert and Feraud carried the musket in the ranks of the so-called sacred battalion—a battalion recruited from officers of all arms who had no longer any troops to lead.

In that battalion promoted colonels did duty as sergeants; the generals captained the companies; a marshal of France, Prince of the Empire, commanded the whole. All had provided themselves with muskets picked up on the road, and with cartridges taken from the dead. In the general destruction of the bonds of discipline and duty holding together the companies, the battalions, the regiments, the brigades, and divisions of an armed host, this body of men put its pride in preserving some semblance of order and formation. The only stragglers were those who fell out to give up to the frost their exhausted souls. They plodded on, and their passage did not disturb the mortal silence of the plains, shining with the livid light of snows under a sky the color of ashes. Whirlwinds ran along the fields, broke against the dark column, enveloped it in a turmoil of flying icicles, and subsided, disclosing it creeping on its tragic way without the swing and rhythm of the military pace. It struggled onward, the men exchanging neither word

nor looks; whole ranks marched touching elbow, day after day, and never raising their eyes from the ground, as if lost in despairing reflections. In the dumb, black forests of pines the cracking of overloaded branches was the only sound they heard. Often from daybreak to dusk no one spoke in the whole column. It was like a *macabre* march of struggling corpses toward a distant grave. Only an alarm of Cossacks could restore to their eyes a semblance of martial resolution. The battalion faced about and deployed, or formed square under the endless fluttering of snowflakes. A cloud of horsemen with fur caps on their heads levelled long lances, and yelled "Hurrah! Hurrah!" around their menacing immobility whence, with muffled detonations, hundreds of dark red flames darted through the air thick with falling snow. In a very few moments the horsemen would disappear, as if carried off yelling in the gale, and the sacred battalion standing still, alone in the blizzard, heard only the howling of the wind, whose blasts searched their very hearts. Then, with a cry or two of *Vive l'Empereur!* it would resume its march, leaving behind a few lifeless bodies lying huddled up, tiny black specks on the white immensity of the snows.

Though often marching in the ranks, or skirmishing in the woods side by side, the two officers ignored each other; this not so much from inimical intention as from a very real indifference. All their store of moral energy was expended in resisting the terrific enmity of nature and the crushing sense of irretrievable disaster. To the last they counted among the most active, the least demoralized of

the battalion; their vigorous vitality invested them both with the appearance of an heroic pair in the eyes of their comrades. And they never exchanged more than a casual word or two, except one day, when skirmishing in front of the battalion against a worrying attack of cavalry, they found themselves cut off in the woods by a small party of Cossacks. A score of fur-capped, hairy horsemen rode to and fro, brandishing their lances in ominous silence; but the two officers had no mind to lay down their arms, and Colonel Feraud suddenly spoke up in a hoarse, growling voice, bringing his firelock to the shoulder: "You take the nearest brute, Colonel D'Hubert; I'll settle the next one. I am a better shot than you are."

Colonel D'Hubert nodded over his levelled musket. Their shoulders were pressed against the trunk of a large tree; on their front enormous snow-drifts protected them from a direct charge. Two carefully aimed shots rang out in the frosty air, two Cossacks reeled in their saddles. The rest, not thinking the game good enough, closed round their wounded comrades and galloped away out of range. The two officers managed to rejoin their battalion halted for the night. During that afternoon they had leaned upon each other more than once, and toward the end, Colonel D'Hubert, whose long legs gave him an advantage in walking through soft snow, peremptorily took the musket of Colonel Feraud from him and carried it on his shoulder, using his own as a staff.

On the outskirts of a village half buried in the snow an old wooden barn burned with a clear and an

immense flame. The sacred battalion of skeletons, muffled in rags, crowded greedily the windward side, stretching hundreds of numbed, bony hands to the blaze. Nobody had noted their approach. Before entering the circle of light playing on the sunken, glassy-eyed, starved faces, Colonel D'Hubert spoke in his turn:

"Here's your musket, Colonel Feraud. I can walk better than you."

Colonel Feraud nodded, and pushed on toward the warmth of the fierce flames. Colonel D'Hubert was more deliberate, but not the less bent on getting a place in the front rank. Those they shouldered aside tried to greet with a faint cheer the reappearance of the two indomitable companions in activity and endurance. Those manly qualities had never perhaps received a higher tribute than this feeble acclamation.

This is the faithful record of speeches exchanged during the retreat from Moscow by Colonels Feraud and D'Hubert. Colonel Feraud's taciturnity was the outcome of concentrated rage. Short, hairy, black-faced, with layers of grime and the thick sprouting of a wiry beard, a frost-bitten hand wrapped up in filthy rags carried in a sling, he accused fate of unparalleled perfidy toward the sublime Man of Destiny. Colonel D'Hubert, his long moustaches pendent in icicles on each side of his cracked blue lips, his eyelids inflamed with the glare of snows, the principal part of his costume consisting of a sheepskin coat looted with difficulty from the frozen corpse of a camp follower found in an abandoned cart, took a more thoughtful view of

events. His regularly handsome features, now reduced to mere bony lines and fleshless hollows, looked out of a woman's black velvet hood, over which was rammed forcibly a cocked hat picked up under the wheels of an empty army fourgon, which must have contained at one time some general officer's luggage. The sheepskin coat being short for a man of his inches ended very high up, and the skin of his legs, blue with the cold, showed through the tatters of his nether garments. This under the circumstances provoked neither jeers nor pity. No one cared how the next man felt or looked. Colonel D'Hubert himself, hardened to exposure, suffered mainly in his self-respect from the lamentable indecency of his costume. A thoughtless person may think that with a whole host of inanimate bodies bestrewing the path of retreat there could not have been much difficulty in supplying the deficiency. But to loot a pair of breeches from a frozen corpse is not so easy as it may appear to a mere theorist. It requires time and labor. You must remain behind while your companions march on. Colonel D'Hubert had his scruples as to falling out. Once he had stepped aside he could not be sure of ever rejoining his battalion; and the ghastly intimacy of a wrestling match with the frozen dead opposing the unyielding rigidity of iron to your violence was repugnant to the delicacy of his feelings. Luckily, one day, grubbing in a mound of snow between the huts of a village in the hope of finding there a frozen potato or some vegetable garbage he could put between his long and shaky teeth, Colonel D'Hubert uncovered a couple of mats of the sort Russian

peasants use to line the sides of their carts with. These, beaten free of frozen snow, bent about his elegant person and fastened solidly round his waist, made a bellshaped nether garment, a sort of stiff petticoat, which rendered Colonel D'Hubert a perfectly decent, but a much more noticeable figure than before.

Thus accoutred, he continued to retreat, never doubting of his personal escape, but full of other misgivings. The early buoyancy of his belief in the future was destroyed. If the road of glory led through such unforeseen passages, he asked himself—for he was reflective—whether the guide was altogether trustworthy. It was a patriotic sadness, not unmingled with some personal concern, and quite unlike the unreasoning indignation against men and things nursed by Colonel Feraud. Recruiting his strength in a little German town for three weeks, Colonel D'Hubert was surprised to discover within himself a love of repose. His returning vigor was strangely pacific in its aspirations. He meditated silently upon this bizarre change of mood. No doubt many of his brother officers of field rank went through the same moral experience. But these were not the times to talk of it. In one of his letters home Colonel D'Hubert wrote: "All your plans, my dear Léonie, for marrying me to the charming girl you have discovered in your neighborhood, seem farther off than ever. Peace is not yet. Europe wants another lesson. It will be a hard task for us, but it shall be done, because the Emperor is invincible."

Thus wrote Colonel D'Hubert from Pomerania

to his married sister Léonie, settled in the south of France. And so far the sentiments expressed would not have been disowned by Colonel Feraud, who wrote no letters to anybody, whose father had been in life an illiterate blacksmith, who had no sister or brother, and whom no one desired ardently to pair off for a life of peace with a charming young girl. But Colonel D'Hubert's letter contained also some philosophical generalities upon the uncertainty of all personal hopes, when bound up entirely with the prestigious fortune of one incomparably great it is true, yet still remaining but a man in his greatness. This view would have appeared rank heresy to Colonel Feraud. Some melancholy forebodings of a military kind, expressed cautiously, would have been pronounced as nothing short of high treason by Colonel Feraud. But Léonie, the sister of Colonel D'Hubert, read them with profound satisfaction, and, folding the letter thoughtfully, remarked to herself that "Armand was likely to prove eventually a sensible fellow." Since her marriage into a Southern family she had become a convinced believer in the return of the legitimate king. Hopeful and anxious, she offered prayers night and morning, and burnt candles in churches for the safety and prosperity of her brother.

She had every reason to suppose that her prayers were heard. Colonel D'Hubert passed through Lutzen, Bautzen, and Leipsic losing no limb, and acquiring additional reputation. Adapting his conduct to the needs of that desperate time, he had never voiced his misgivings. He concealed them under a cheerful courtesy of such pleasant character

that people were inclined to ask themselves with wonder whether Colonel D'Hubert was aware of any disasters. Not only his manners, but even his glances remained untroubled. The steady amenity of his blue eyes disconcerted all grumblers, and made despair itself pause.

This bearing was remarked favorably by the Emperor himself; for Colonel D'Hubert, attached now to the Major-General's staff, came on several occasions under the imperial eye. But it exasperated the higher strung nature of Colonel Feraud. Passing through Magdeburg on service, this last allowed himself, while seated gloomily at dinner with the *Commandant de Place*, to say of his life-long adversary: "This man does not love the Emperor," and his words were received by the other guests in profound silence. Colonel Feraud, troubled in his conscience at the atrocity of the aspersion, felt the need to back it up by a good argument. "I ought to know him," he cried, adding some oaths. "One studies one's adversary. I have met him on the ground half a dozen times, as all the army knows. What more do you want? If that isn't opportunity enough for any fool to size up his man, may the devil take me if I can tell what is." And he looked around the table obstinate and sombre.

Later on in Paris, while extremely busy reorganizing his regiment, Colonel Feraud learned that Colonel D'Hubert had been made a general. He glared at his informant incredulously, then folded his arms and turned away muttering: "Nothing surprises me on the part of that man."

And aloud he added, speaking over his shoulder:

"You would oblige me greatly by telling General D'Hubert at the first opportunity that his advancement saves him for a time from a pretty hot encounter. I was only waiting for him to turn up here."

The other officer remonstrated:

"Could you think of it, Colonel Feraud, at this time, when every life should be consecrated to the glory and safety of France?"

But the strain of unhappiness caused by military reverses had spoiled Colonel Feraud's character. Like many other men, he was rendered wicked by misfortune.

"I cannot consider General D'Hubert's existence of any account either for the glory or safety of France," he snapped viciously. "You don't pretend, perhaps, to know him better than I do—I who have met him half a dozen times on the ground—do you?"

His interlocutor, a young man, was silenced. Colonel Feraud walked up and down the room.

"This is not the time to mince matters," he said. "I can't believe that that man ever loved the Emperor. He picked up his general's stars under the boots of Marshal Berthier. Very well. I'll get mine in another fashion, and then we shall settle this business which has been dragging on too long."

General D'Hubert, informed indirectly of Colonel Feraud's attitude, made a gesture as if to put aside an importunate person. His thoughts were solicited by graver cares. He had had no time to go and see his family. His sister, whose royalist

hopes were rising higher every day, though proud of her brother, regretted his recent advancement in a measure, because it put on him a prominent mark of the usurper's favor, which later on could have an adverse influence upon his career. He wrote to her that no one but an inveterate enemy could say he had got his promotion by favor. As to his career, he assured her that he looked no farther forward into the future than the next battlefield.

Beginning the campaign of France in this dogged spirit, General D'Hubert was wounded on the second day of the battle under Laon. While being carried off the field he heard that Colonel Feraud, promoted this moment to general, had been sent to replace him at the head of his brigade. He cursed his luck impulsively, not being able at first glance to discern all the advantages of a nasty wound. And yet it was by this heroic method that Providence was shaping his future. Travelling slowly south to his sister's country home, under the care of a trusty old servant, General D'Hubert was spared the humiliating contacts and the perplexities of conduct which assailed the men of Napoleonic empire at the moment of its downfall. Lying in his bed, with the windows of his room open wide to the sunshine of Provence, he perceived the undisguised aspect of the blessing conveyed by that jagged fragment of a Prussian shell, which, killing his horse and ripping open his thigh, saved him from an active conflict with his conscience. After the last fourteen years spent sword in hand in the saddle, and with the sense of his duty done to the very end, General D'Hubert found resignation an easy virtue. His

sister was delighted with his reasonableness. "I leave myself altogether in your hands, my dear Léonie," he had said to her.

He was still laid up when, the credit of his brother-in-law's family being exerted on his behalf, he received from the royal government not only the confirmation of his rank, but the assurance of being retained on the active list. To this was added an unlimited convalescent leave. The unfavorable opinion entertained of him in Bonapartist circles, though it rested on nothing more solid than the unsupported pronouncement of General Feraud, was directly responsible for General D'Hubert's retention on the active list. As to General Feraud, his rank was confirmed, too. It was more than he dared to expect; but Marshal Soult, then Minister of War to the restored king, was partial to officers who had served in Spain. Only not even the marshal's protection could secure for him active employment. He remained irreconcilable, idle, and sinister. He sought in obscure restaurants the company of other half-pay officers who cherished dingy but glorious old tricolor cockades in their breast-pockets, and buttoned with the forbidden eagle buttons their shabby uniforms, declaring themselves too poor to afford the expense of the prescribed change.

The triumphant return from Elba, a historical fact as marvellous and incredible as the exploits of some mythological demi-god, found General D'Hubert still quite unable to sit a horse. Neither could he walk very well. These disabilities, which Madame Léonie accounted most lucky, helped to keep

her brother out of all possible mischief. His frame of mind at that time, she noted with dismay, became very far from reasonable. This general officer, still menaced by the loss of a limb, was discovered one night in the stables of the château by a groom, who, seeing a light, raised an alarm of thieves. His crutch was lying half-buried in the straw of the litter, and the General was hopping on one leg in a loose box around a snorting horse he was trying to saddle. Such were the effects of imperial magic upon a calm temperament and a pondered mind. Beset in the light of stable lanterns, by the tears, entreaties, indignation, remonstrances, and reproaches of his family, he got out of the difficult situation by fainting away there and then in the arms of his nearest relatives, and was carried off to bed. Before he got out of it again, the second reign of Napoleon, the Hundred Days of feverish agitation and supreme effort, passed away like a terrifying dream. The tragic year of 1815, begun in the trouble and unrest of consciences, was ending in vengeful proscriptions.

How General Feraud escaped the clutches of the Special Commission and the last offices of a firing squad he never knew himself. It was partly due to the subordinate position he was assigned during the Hundred Days. The Emperor had never given him active command, but had kept him busy at the cavalry depot in Paris, mounting and dispatching hastily drilled troopers into the field. Considering this task as unworthy of his abilities, he had discharged it with no offensively noticeable zeal; but for the greater part he was saved from the excesses

of royalist reaction by the interference of General D'Hubert.

This last, still on convalescent leave, but able now to travel, had been despatched by his sister to Paris to present himself to his legitimate sovereign. As no one in the capital could possibly know anything of the episode in the stable, he was received there with distinction. Military to the very bottom of his soul, the prospect of rising in his profession consoled him from finding himself the butt of Bonapartist malevolence, which pursued him with a persistence he could not account for. All the rancour of that embittered and persecuted party pointed to him as the man who had *never* loved the Emperor—a sort of monster essentially worse than a mere betrayer.

General D'Hubert shrugged his shoulders without anger at this ferocious prejudice. Rejected by his old friends, and mistrusting profoundly the advances of Royalist society, the young and handsome General (he was barely forty) adopted a manner of cold, punctilious courtesy, which at the merest shadow of an intended slight passed easily into harsh haughtiness. Thus prepared, General D'Hubert went about his affairs in Paris feeling inwardly very happy with the peculiar uplifting happiness of a man very much in love. The charming girl looked out by his sister had come upon the scene, and had conquered him in the thorough manner in which a young girl by merely existing in his sight can make a man of forty her own. They were going to be married as soon as General D'Hubert had obtained his official nomination to a promised command.

One afternoon, sitting on the *terrasse* of the *Café Tortoni*, General D'Hubert learned from the conversation of two strangers occupying a table near his own that General Feraud, included in the batch of superior officers arrested after the second return of the king, was in danger of passing before the Special Commission. Living all his spare moments, as is frequently the case with expectant lovers, a day in advance of reality, and in a state of bestarred hallucination, it required nothing less than the name of his perpetual antagonist pronounced in a loud voice to call the youngest of Napoleon's generals away from the mental contemplation of his betrothed. He looked round. The strangers wore civilian clothes. Lean and weather-beaten, lolling back in their chairs, they scowled at people with moody and defiant abstraction from under their hats pulled low over their eyes. It was not difficult to recognize them for two of the compulsorily retired officers of the Old Guard. As from bravado or carelessness they chose to speak in loud tones, General D'Hubert, who saw no reason why he should change his seat, heard every word. They did not seem to be the personal friends of General Feraud. His name came up amongst others. Hearing it repeated, General D'Hubert's tender anticipations of a domestic future adorned with a woman's grace were traversed by the harsh regret of his warlike past, of that one long, intoxicating clash of arms, unique in the magnitude of its glory and disaster—the marvellous work and the special possession of his own generation. He felt an irrational tenderness toward his old adversary, and

appreciated emotionally the murderous absurdity their encounter had introduced into his life. It was like an additional pinch of spice in a hot dish. He remembered the flavor with sudden melancholy. He would never taste it again. It was all over. "I fancy it was being left lying in the garden that had exasperated him so against me from the first," he thought indulgently.

The two strangers at the next table had fallen silent after the third mention of General Feraud's name. Presently the elder of the two, speaking again in a bitter tone, affirmed that General Feraud's account was settled. And why? Simply because he was not like some bigwigs who loved only themselves. The Royalists knew they could never make anything of him. He loved *The Other* too well.

The Other was the man of St. Helena. The two officers nodded and touched glasses before they drank to an impossible return. Then the same who had spoken before remarked with a sardonic laugh: "His adversary showed more cleverness."

"What adversary?" asked the younger, as if puzzled.

"Don't you know? They were two hussars. At each promotion they fought a duel. Haven't you heard of a duel going on ever since 1801?"

The other had heard of the duel, of course. Now he understood the allusion. General Baron D'Hubert would be able now to enjoy his fat king's favor in peace.

"Much good it may do him," mumbled the elder. "They are both brave men. I never saw this D'Hubert—a sort of intriguing dandy, I am told. But

I can well believe what I've heard Feraud say of him—that he *never* loved the Emperor.”

They rose and went away.

General D'Hubert experienced the horror of a somnambulist who wakes up from a complacent dream of activity to find himself walking on a quagmire. A profound disgust of the ground over which he was making his way overcame him. Even the image of the charming girl was swept from his view in the flood of moral distress. Everything he had ever been or hoped to be would taste of bitter ignominy unless he could manage to save General Feraud from the fate which threatened so many braves. Under the impulse of this almost morbid need to attend to the safety of his adversary, General D'Hubert worked so well with his hands and feet (as the French saying is), that in less than twenty-four hours he found means of obtaining an extraordinary private audience from the Minister of Police.

General Baron D'Hubert was shown in suddenly without preliminaries. In the dusk of the Minister's cabinet, behind the forms of writing-desk, chairs, and tables, between two bunches of wax candles blazing in sconces, he beheld a figure in a gorgeous coat posturing before a tall mirror. The old *conventionnel* Fouché, Senator of the Empire, traitor to every man, to every principle and motive of human conduct, Duke of Otranto, and the wily artizan of the second Restoration, was trying the fit of a court suit in which his young and accomplished *fiancée* had declared her intention to have his portrait painted on porcelain. It was a caprice, a charming fancy

which the first Minister of Police of the second Restoration was anxious to gratify. For that man, often compared in wiliness of conduct to a fox, but whose ethical side could be worthily symbolized by nothing less emphatic than a skunk, was as much possessed by his love as General D'Hubert himself.

Startled to be discovered thus by the blunder of a servant, he met this little vexation with the characteristic impudence which had served his turn so well in the endless intrigues of his self-seeking career. Without altering his attitude a hair's breadth, one leg in a silk stocking advanced, his hand twisted over his left shoulder, he called out calmly: "This way, General. Pray approach. Well? I am all attention."

While General D'Hubert, ill at ease as if one of his own little weaknesses had been exposed, presented his request as shortly as possible, the Duke of Otranto went on feeling the fit of his collar, settling the lapels before the glass, and buckling his back in an effort to behold the set of the gold-embroidered coat-skirts behind. His still face, his attentive eyes, could not have expressed a more complete interest in those matters if he had been alone.

"Exclude from the operations of the Special Court a certain Feraud, Gabriel Florian, General of brigade of the promotion of 1814?" he repeated, in a slightly wondering tone, and then turned away from the glass. "Why exclude *him* precisely?"

"I am surprised that your Excellency, so competent in the evaluation of men of his time, should have thought worth while to have that name put down on the list."

"A rabid Bonapartist!"

"So is every grenadier and every trooper of the army, as your Excellency well knows. And the individuality of General Feraud can have no more weight than that of any casual grenadier. He is a man of no mental grasp, of no capacity whatever. It is inconceivable that he should ever have any influence."

"He has a well-hung tongue, though," interjected Fouché.

"Noisy, I admit, but not dangerous."

"I will not dispute with you. I know next to nothing of him. Hardly his name, in fact."

"And yet your Excellency has the presidency of the Commission charged by the king to point out those who were to be tried," said General D'Hubert, with an emphasis which did not miss the minister's ear.

"Yes, General," he said, walking away into the dark part of the vast room, and throwing himself into a deep armchair that swallowed him up, all but the soft gleam of gold embroideries and the pallid patch of the face—"yes, General. Take this chair there."

General D'Hubert sat down.

"Yes, General," continued the arch-master in the arts of intrigue and betrayals, whose duplicity, as if at times intolerable to his self-knowledge, found relief in bursts of cynical openness. "I did hurry on the formation of the prescribing Commission, and I took its presidency. And do you know why? Simply from fear that if I did not take it quickly into my hands my own name would head the list of the

proscribed. Such are the times in which we live. But I am minister of the king yet, and I ask you plainly why I should take the name of this obscure Feraud off the list? You wonder how his name got there! It is possible that you should know men so little? My dear General, at the very first sitting of the Commission names poured on us like rain off the roof of the Tuileries. Names! We had our choice of thousands. How do you know the name of this Feraud, whose life or death don't matter to France, does not keep out some other name?"

The voice out of the armchair stopped. Opposite General D'Hubert sat still, shadowy, and silent. Only his sabre clinked slightly. The voice in the armchair began again: "And we must try to satisfy the exigencies of the Allied Sovereigns, too. The Prince de Talleyrand told me only yesterday that Nesselrode had informed him officially of His Majesty the Emperor Alexander's dissatisfaction at the small number of examples the Government of the king intends to make—especially amongst military men. I tell you this confidentially."

"Upon my word!" broke out General D'Hubert, speaking through his teeth, "if your Excellency deigns to favor me with any more confidential information I don't know what I will do. It's enough to break one's sword over one's knee, and fling the pieces"

"What government you imagined yourself to be serving?" interrupted the minister sharply.

After a short pause the crestfallen voice of Gen-

eral D'Hubert answered, "The Government of France."

"That's paying your conscience off with mere words, General. The truth is that you are serving a government of returned exiles, of men who have been without country for twenty years. Of men also who have just got over a very bad and humiliating fright. . . . Have no illusions on that score."

The Duke of Otranto ceased. He had relieved himself, and had attained his object of stripping some self-respect off that man who had inconveniently discovered him posturing in a gold-embroidered court costume before a mirror. But they were a hot-headed lot in the army; it occurred to him that it would be inconvenient if a well-disposed general officer, received in audience on the recommendation of one of the Princes, were to do something rashly scandalous directly after a private interview with the minister. In a changed tone he put a question to the point. "Your relation—this Feraud?"

"No. No relation at all."

"Intimate friend?"

"Intimate . . . yes. There is between us an intimate connection of a nature which makes it a point of honor with me to try"

The minister rang a bell without waiting for the end of the phrase. When the servant had gone out, after bringing in a pair of heavy silver candelabra for the writing-desk, the Duke of Otranto rose, his breast glistening all over with gold in the strong light, and taking a piece of paper out of a drawer,

held it in his hand ostentatiously while he said with persuasive gentleness: "You must not speak of breaking your sword across your knee, General. Perhaps you would never get another. The Emperor will not return this time. . . . *Diable d'homme!* There was just a moment, here in Paris, soon after Waterloo, when he frightened me. It looked as though he were ready to begin all over again. Luckily one never does begin all over again, really. You must not think of breaking your sword, General."

General D'Hubert, looking on the ground, moved slightly his hand in a hopeless gesture of renunciation. The Minister of Police turned his eyes away from him, and scanned deliberately the paper he had been holding up all the time.

"There are only twenty general officers selected to be made an example of. Twenty. A round number. And let's see, Feraud. . . . Ah, he's there. Gabriel Florian. *Parfaitement*. That's your man. Well, there will be only nineteen examples made now."

General D'Hubert stood up feeling as though he had gone through an infectious illness. "I must beg your Excellency to keep my interference a profound secret. I attach the greatest importance to his never learning . . ."

"Who is going to inform him, I should like to know?" said Fouché, raising his eyes curiously to General D'Hubert's tense, set face. "Take one of these pens, and run it through the name yourself. This is the only list in existence. If you are careful to take up enough ink no one will be able to tell

what was the name struck out. But, *par exemple*, I am not responsible for what Clarke will do with him afterward. If he persists in being rabid he will be ordered by the Minister of War to reside in some provincial town under the supervision of the police."

A few days later General D'Hubert was saying to his sister, after the first greetings had been got over: "Ah, my dear Léonie! it seemed to me I couldn't get away from Paris quick enough."

"Effect of love," she suggested, with a malicious smile.

"And horror," added General D'Hubert, with profound seriousness. "I have nearly died there of . . . of nausea."

His face was contracted with disgust. And as his sister looked at him attentively, he continued: "I have had to see Fouché. I have had an audience. I have been in his cabinet. There remains with one, who had the misfortune to breathe the air of the same room with that man, a sense of diminished dignity, an uneasy feeling of being not so clean, after all, as one hoped one was. . . . But you can't understand."

She nodded quickly several times. She understood very well on the contrary. She knew her brother thoroughly, and liked him as he was. Moreover, the scorn and loathing of mankind were the lot of the *Jacobin* Fouché, who, exploiting for his own advantage every weakness, every virtue, every generous illusion of mankind, made dupes of his whole generation, and died obscurely as Duke of Otranto.

"My dear Armand," she said compassionately, "what could you want from that man?"

"Nothing less than a life," answered General D'Hubert. "And I've got it. It had to be done. But I feel yet as if I could never forgive the necessity to the man I had to save."

General Feraud, totally unable (as is the case with most of us) to comprehend what was happening to him, received the Minister of War's order to proceed at once to a small town of Central France with feelings whose natural expression consisted in a fierce rolling of the eye and savage grinding of the teeth. The passing away of the state of war, the only condition of society he had ever known, the horrible view of a world at peace, frightened him. He went away to his little town firmly convinced that this could not last. There he was informed of his retirement from the army, and that his pension (calculated on the scale of a colonel's rank) was made dependent on the correctness of his conduct, and on the good reports of the police. No longer in the army! He felt suddenly strange to the earth, like a disembodied spirit. It was impossible to exist. But at first he reacted from sheer incredulity. This could not be. He waited for thunder, earthquakes, natural cataclysms; but nothing happened. The leaden weight of an irremediable idleness descended upon General Feraud, who having no resources within himself sank into a state of awe-inspiring hebetude. He haunted the streets of the little town, gazing before him with lack-lustre eyes, disregarding the hats raised on his passage; and people, nudging each other as he went by, whis-

pered: "That's poor General Feraud. His heart is broken. Behold how he loved the Emperor."

The other living wreckage of Napoleonic tempest clustered round General Feraud with infinite respect. He, himself, imagined his soul to be crushed by grief. He suffered from quickly succeeding impulses to weep, to howl, to bite his fists till blood came, to spend days on his bed with his head thrust under the pillow; but these arose from sheer ennui, from the anguish of an immense, indescribable, inconceivable boredom. His mental inability to grasp the hopeless nature of his case as a whole saved him from suicide. He never even thought of it once. He thought of nothing. But his appetite abandoned him, and the difficulty he experienced to express the overwhelming nature of his feelings (the most furious swearing could do no justice to it) induced gradually a habit of silence—a sort of death to a southern temperament.

Great, therefore, was the sensation amongst the *anciens militaires* frequenting a certain little café full of flies, when one stuffy afternoon "that poor General Feraud" let out suddenly a volley of formidable curses.

He had been sitting quietly in his own privileged corner looking through the Paris gazettes with just as much interest as a condemned man on the eve of execution could be expected to show in the news of the day. A cluster of martial, bronze faces, amongst which there was one lacking an eye, and another the tip of a nose frost-bitten in Russia, surrounded him anxiously.

"What's the matter, General?"

General Feraud 'sat erect, holding the folded newspaper at arm's length in order to make out the small print better. He read to himself, over again, fragments of the intelligence which had caused, what may be called, his resurrection.

"We are informed that General D'Hubert, till now on sick leave in the south, is to be called to the command of the Fifth Cavalry brigade in . . ."

He dropped the paper stonily. . . . "Called to the command" . . . and suddenly gave his forehead a mighty slap. "I had almost forgotten him," he muttered, in a conscience-stricken tone.

A deep-chested veteran shouted across the café: "Some new villainy of the Government, General?"

"The villainies of these scoundrels," thundered General Feraud, "are innumerable. One more one less!" . . . He lowered his tone. "But I will set good order to one of them at least."

He looked all round the faces. "There's a pomaded, curled staff officer, the darling of some of the marshals who sold their father for a handful of English gold. He will find out presently that I am alive yet," he declared, in a dogmatic tone. "However, this is a private affair. An old affair of honor. Bah! Our honor does not matter. Here we are driven off with a split ear like a lot of cast troop horses—good only for a knacker's yard. But it would be like striking a blow for the Emperor. . . . Messieurs, I shall require the assistance of two of you."

Every man moved forward. General Feraud, deeply touched by this demonstration, called with visible emotion upon the one-eyed veteran cuirassier

and the officer of the Chasseurs à Cheval who had left the tip of his nose in Russia. He excused his choice to the others.

"A cavalry affair this—you know."

He was answered with a varied chorus of "*Parfaitement mon Général. . . . C'est juste. . . . Parbleu, c'est connu. . . .*" Everybody was satisfied. The three left the café together, followed by cries of "*Bonne chance.*"

Outside they linked arms, the General in the middle. The three rusty cocked hats worn *en bataille* with a sinister forward slant barred the narrow street nearly right across. The overheated little town of gray stones and red tiles was drowsing away its provincial afternoon under a blue sky. The loud blows of a cooper hooping a cask reverberated regularly between the houses. The General dragged his left foot a little in the shade of the walls.

"This damned winter of 1813 has got into my bones for good. Never mind. We must take pistols, that's all. A little lumbago. We must have pistols. He's game for my bag. My eyes are as keen as ever. You should have seen me in Russia picking off the dodging Cossacks with a beastly old infantry musket. I have a natural gift for firearms."

In this strain General Feraud ran on, holding up his head, with owlsh eyes and rapacious beak. A mere fighter all his life, a cavalry man, a *sabreur*, he conceived war with the utmost simplicity, as, in the main, a massed lot of personal contests, a sort of gregarious duelling. And here he had in hand a war of his own. He revived. The shadow of

peace passed away from him like the shadow of death. It was the marvellous resurrection of the named Feraud, Gabriel Florian, *engagé volontaire* of 1793, General of 1814, buried without ceremony by means of the service order signed by the War Minister of the second Restoration.



IV

NO MAN succeeds in everything he undertakes. In that sense we are all failures. The great point is not to fail in ordering and sustaining the effort of our life. In this matter vanity is what leads us astray. It hurries us into situations from which we must come out damaged; whereas pride is our safeguard, by the reserve it imposes on the choice of our endeavor as much as by the virtue of its sustaining power.

General D'Hubert was proud and reserved. He had not been damaged by his casual love affairs, successful or otherwise. In his war-scarred body his heart at forty remained unscratched. Entering with reserve into his sister's matrimonial plans, he had felt himself falling irremediably in love as one falls off a roof. He was too proud to be frightened. Indeed, the sensation was too delightful to be alarming.

The experience of a man of forty is a much more serious thing than the inexperience of a youth of twenty, for it is not helped out by the rashness of hot blood. The girl was mysterious, as young girls are by the mere effect of their guarded ingenuity; and to him the mysteriousness of that young girl appeared exceptional and fascinating. But there was nothing mysterious about the arrangements of the match which Madame Léonie had promoted. There was nothing peculiar, either. It was a very ap-

propriate match, commending itself extremely to the young lady's mother (the father was dead) and tolerable to the young lady's uncle—an old *émigré* lately returned from Germany, and pervading, cane in hand, a lean ghost of the *ancien régime*, the garden walks of the young lady's ancestral home.

General D'Hubert was not the man to be satisfied merely with the woman and the fortune—when it came to the point. His pride (and pride aims always at true success) would be satisfied with nothing short of love. But as true pride excludes vanity, he could not imagine any reason why this mysterious creature with deep and brilliant eyes of a violet color should have any feeling for him warmer than indifference. The young lady (her name was Adèle) baffled every attempt at a clear understanding on that point. It is true that the attempts were clumsy and made timidly, because by then General D'Hubert had become acutely aware of the number of his years, of his wounds, of his many moral imperfections, of his secret unworthiness—and had incidentally learned by experience the meaning of the word funk. As far as he could make out she seemed to imply that, with an unbounded confidence in her mother's affection and sagacity, she felt no unsurmountable dislike for the person of General D'Hubert; and that this was quite sufficient for a well-brought-up young lady to begin married life upon. This view hurt and tormented the pride of General D'Hubert. And yet he asked himself, with a sort of sweet despair, what more could he expect? She had a quiet and luminous forehead. Her violet eyes laughed while the lines of her lips and chin re-

mained composed in admirable gravity. All this was set off by such a glorious mass of fair hair, by a complexion so marvellous, by such a grace of expression, that General D'Hubert really never found the opportunity to examine with sufficient detachment the lofty exigencies of his pride. In fact he became shy of that line of enquiry since it had led once or twice to a crisis of solitary passion in which it was borne upon him that he loved her enough to kill her rather than lose her. From such passages, not unknown to men of forty, he would come out broken, exhausted, remorseful, a little dismayed. He derived, however, considerable comfort from the quietest practice of sitting now and then half the night by an open window and meditating upon the wonder of her existence, like a believer lost in the mystic contemplation of his faith.

It must not be supposed that all these variations of his inward state were made manifest to the world. General D'Hubert found no difficulty in appearing wreathed in smiles. Because, in fact, he was happy. He followed his established rules of his condition, sending over flowers (from his sister's garden and hot-houses) early every morning, and a little later following himself to lunch with his intended, her mother, and her *émigré* uncle. The middle of the day was spent in strolling or sitting in the shade. A watchful deference, trembling on the verge of tenderness, was the note of their intercourse on his side—with a playful turn of the phrase concealing the profound trouble of his whole being caused by her inaccessible nearness. Late in the afternoon General D'Hubert walked home between the fields of

vines, sometimes intensely miserable, sometimes supremely happy, sometimes pensively sad; but always feeling a special intensity of existence, that elation common to artists, poets, and lovers—to men haunted by a great passion, a noble thought, or a new vision of plastic beauty.

The outward world at that time did not exist with any special distinctness for General D'Hubert. One evening, however, crossing a ridge from which he could see both houses, General D'Hubert became aware of two figures far down the road. The day had been divine. The festal decoration of the inflamed sky lent a gentle glow to the sober tints of the southern land. The gray rocks, the brown fields, the purple, undulating distances harmonized in luminous accord, exhaled already the scents of the evening. The two figures down the road presented themselves like two rigid and wooden silhouettes all black on the ribbon of white dust. General D'Hubert made out the long, straight, military *capotes* buttoned closely right up to the black stocks, the cocked hats, the lean, carven brown countenances—old soldiers—*vieilles moustaches!* The taller of the two had a black patch over one eye; the other's hard, dry countenance presented some bizarre, disquieting peculiarity, which on nearer approach proved to be the absence of the tip of the nose. Lifting their hands with one movement to salute the slightly lame civilian walking with a thick stick, they inquired for the house where the General Baron D'Hubert lived, and what was the best way to get speech with him quietly.

"If you think this quiet enough," said General

D'Hubert, looking round at the vine-fields, framed in purple lines, and dominated by the nest of gray and drab walls of a village clustering around the top of a conical hill, so that the blunt church tower seemed but the shape of a crowning rock—"if you think this spot quiet enough, you can speak to him at once. And I beg you, comrades, to speak openly, with perfect confidence."

They stepped back at this, and raised again their hands to their hats with marked ceremoniousness. Then the one with the chipped nose, speaking for both, remarked that the matter was confidential enough, and to be arranged discreetly. Their general quarters were established in that village over there, where the infernal clodhoppers—damn their false, Royalist hearsds!—looked remarkably cross-eyed at three unassuming military men. For the present he should only ask for the name of General D'Hubert's friends.

"What friends?" said the astonished General D'Hubert, completely off the track. "I am staying with my brother-in-law over there."

"Well, he will do for one," said the chipped veteran.

"We're the friends of General Feraud," interjected the other, who had kept silent till then, only glowering with his one eye at the man who had *never* loved the Emperor. That was something to look at. For even the gold-laced Judases who had sold him to the English, the marshals and princes, had loved him at some time or other. But this man had *never* loved the Emperor. General Feraud had said so distinctly.

General D'Hubert felt an inward blow in his chest. For an infinitesimal fraction of a second it was as if the spinning of the earth had become perceptible with an awful, slight rustle in the eternal stillness of space. But the noise of blood in his ears passed off at once. Involuntarily he murmured, "Feraud! I had forgotten his existence."

"He's existing at present, very uncomfortably, it is true, in the infamous inn of that nest of savages up there," said the one-eyed cuirassier dryly. "We arrived in your parts an hour ago on post horses. He's awaiting our return with impatience. There is hurry, you know. The General has broken the ministerial order to obtain from you the satisfaction he's entitled to by the laws of honor, and naturally he's anxious to have it all over before the *gendarmerie* gets on his scent."

The other elucidated the idea a little further: "Get back on the quiet—you understand? Phitt. No one the wiser. We have broken out, too. Your friend the king would be glad to cut off our scurvy pittances at the first chance. It's a risk. But honor before everything."

General D'Hubert had recovered his power of speech. "So you come here like this along the road to invite me to a throat-cutting match with that—that. . . ." A laughing sort of rage took possession of him. "Ha! ha! ha! ha!"

His fists on his hips, he roared without restraint, while they stood before him lank and straight, as though they had been shot up with a snap through a trapdoor in the ground. Only four-and-twenty months ago the masters of Europe, they had already

the air of antique ghosts, they seemed less substantial in their faded coats than their own narrow shadows falling so black across the white road: the military and grotesque shadows of twenty years of war and conquests. They had an outlandish appearance of two imperturbable bonzes of the religion of the sword. And General D'Hubert, also one of the ex-masters of Europe, laughed at these serious phantoms standing in his way.

Said one, indicating the laughing General with a jerk of the head: "A merry companion, that."

"There are some of us that haven't smiled from the day *The Other* went away," remarked his comrade.

A violent impulse to set upon and beat those unsubstantial wraiths to the ground frightened General D'Hubert. He ceased laughing suddenly. His desire now was to get rid of them, to get them away from his sight quickly before he lost control of himself. He wondered at the fury he felt rising in his breast. But he had no time to look into that peculiarity just then.

"I understand your wish to be done with me as quickly as possible. Don't let us waste time in empty ceremonies. Do you see that wood there at the foot of that slope? Yes, the wood of pines. Let us meet there to-morrow at sunrise. I will bring with me my sword or my pistols, or both if you like."

The seconds of General Feraud looked at each other.

"Pistols, General," said the cuirassier.

"So be it. Au revoir—to-morrow morning. Till

then let me advise you to keep close if you don't want the *gendarmérie* making inquiries about you before it gets dark. Strangers are rare in this part of the country."

They saluted in silence. General D'Hubert, turning his back on their retreating forms, stood still in the middle of the road for a long time, biting his lower lip and looking on the ground. Then he began to walk straight before him, thus retracing his steps till he found himself before the park gate of his intended's house. Dusk had fallen. Motionless he stared through the bars at the front of the house, gleaming clear beyond the thickets and trees. Footsteps scrunched on the gravel, and presently a tall stooping shape emerged from the lateral alley following the inner side of the park wall.

Le Chevalier de Valmassigue, uncle of the adorable Adèle, ex-brigadier in the army of the Princes, book-binder in Altona, afterward shoemaker (with a great reputation for elegance in the fit of ladies' shoes) in another small German town, wore silk stockings on his lean shanks, low shoes with silver buckles, a brocaded waistcoat. A long-skirted coat, *à la française*, covered loosely his thin bowed back. A small three-cornered hat rested on a lot of powdered hair, tied in a queue.

"*Monsieur le Chevalier*," called General D'Hubert softly.

"What? You here again, *mon ami*? Have you forgotten something?"

"By heavens! that's just it. I have forgotten something. I am come to tell you of it. No—out-

side. Behind this wall. It's too ghastly a thing to be let in at all where she lives."

The Chevalier came out at once with that benevolent resignation some old people display toward the fugue of youth. Older by a quarter of a century than General D'Hubert, he looked upon him in the secret of his heart as a rather troublesome youngster in love. He had heard his enigmatical words very well, but attached no undue importance to what a mere man of forty so hard hit was likely to do or say. The turn of mind of the generation of Frenchmen grown up during the years of his exile was almost unintelligible to him. Their sentiments appeared to him unduly violent, lacking fineness and measure, their language needlessly exaggerated. He joined calmly the General on the road, and they made a few steps in silence, the General trying to master his agitation, and get proper control of his voice.

"It is perfectly true; I forgot something. I forgot till half an hour ago that I had an urgent affair of honor on my hands. It's incredible, but it is so!"

All was still for a moment. Then in the profound evening silence of the countryside the clear, aged voice of the Chevalier was heard trembling slightly. "Monsieur! That's an indignity."

It was his first thought. The girl born during his exile, the posthumous daughter of his poor brother murdered by a band of Jacobins, had grown since his return very dear to his old heart, which had been starving on mere memories of affection for so many years. "It is an inconceivable thing, I say! A man settles such affairs before he thinks of asking

for a young girl's hand. Why! If you had forgotten for ten days longer, you would have been married before your memory returned to you. In my time men did not forget such things—nor yet what is due to the feelings of an innocent young woman. If I did not respect them myself, I would qualify your conduct in a way which you would not like."

General D'Hubert relieved himself frankly by a groan. "Don't let that consideration prevent you. You run no risk of offending her mortally."

But the old man paid no attention to this lover's nonsense. It's doubtful whether he even heard. "What is it?" he asked. "What's the nature of . . . ?"

"Call it a youthful folly, *Monsieur le Chevalier*. An inconceivable, incredible result of . . ." He stopped short. "He will never believe the story," he thought. "He will only think I am taking him for a fool, and get offended." General D'Hubert spoke up again. "Yes, originating in youthful folly, it has become . . ."

The Chevalier interrupted. "Well, then it must be arranged."

"Arranged?"

"Yes, no matter at what cost to your *amour propre*. You should have remembered you were engaged. You forgot that, too, I suppose. And then you go and forget your quarrel. It's the most hopeless exhibition of levity I ever heard of."

"Good heavens, monsieur! You don't imagine I have been picking up this quarrel last time I was in Paris, or anything of the sort, do you?"

"Eh! What matters the precise date of your insane conduct," exclaimed the Chevalier testily. "The principal thing is to arrange it."

Noticing General D'Hubert getting restive and trying to place a word, the old *émigré* raised his hand, and added with dignity, "I've been a soldier, too. I would never dare suggest a doubtful step to the man whose name my niece is to bear. I tell you that *entre galants hommes* an affair can always be arranged."

"But, *saperlotte*, *Monsieur le Chevalier*, it's fifteen or sixteen years ago. I was a lieutenant of hussars then."

The old Chevalier seemed confounded by the vehemently despairing tone of this information. "You were a lieutenant of hussars sixteen years ago!" he mumbled in a dazed manner.

"Why, yes! You did not suppose I was made a general in my cradle like a royal prince."

In the deepening purple twilight of the fields spread with vine leaves, backed by a low band of sombre crimson in the west, the voice of the old ex-officer in the army of the Princes sounded collected, punctiliously civil.

"Do I dream? Is this a pleasantry? Or am I to understand that you have been hatching an affair of honor for sixteen years?"

"It has clung to me for that length of time. That is my precise meaning. The quarrel itself is not to be explained easily. We met on the ground several times during that time, of course."

"What manners! What horrible perversion of manliness! Nothing can account for such inhu-

manity but the sanguinary madness of the Revolution which has tainted a whole generation," mused the returned *émigré* in a low tone. "Who's your adversary?" he asked a little louder.

"My adversary? His name is Feraud."

Shadowy in his *tricorne* and old-fashioned clothes, like a bowed, thin ghost of the *ancien régime*, the Chevalier voiced a ghastly memory. "I can remember the feud about little Sophie Derval, between Monsieur de Brissac, Captain in the Bodyguards, and d'Anjorrant (not the pock-marked one, the other—the Beau d'Anjorrant, as they called him). They met three times in eighteen months in a most gallant manner. It was the fault of that little Sophie, too, who *would* keep on playing . . ."

"This is nothing of the kind," interrupted General D'Hubert. He laughed a little sardonically. "Not at all so simple," he added. "Nor yet half so reasonable," he finished inaudibly between his teeth, and ground them with rage.

After this sound nothing troubled the silence for a long time, till the Chevalier asked, without animation: "What is he—this Feraud?"

"Lieutenant of hussars, too—I mean he's a general. A Gascon. Son of a blacksmith, I believe."

"There! I thought so. That Bonaparte had a special predilection for the *canaille*. I don't mean this for you, D'Hubert. You are one of us, though you have served this usurper, who . . ."

"Let's leave him out of this," broke in General D'Hubert.

The Chevalier shrugged his peaked shoulders. "Feraud of sorts. Offspring of a blacksmith and

some village troll. See what comes of mixing yourself up with that sort of people."

"You have made shoes yourself, Chevalier."

"Yes. But I am not the son of a shoemaker. Neither are you, Monsieur D'Hubert. You and I have something that your Bonaparte's princes, dukes, and marshals have not, because there's no power on earth that could give it to them," retorted the *émigré*, with the rising animation of a man who has got hold of a hopeful argument. "Those people don't exist—all these Ferauds. Feraud! What is Feraud? A *va-nu-pieds* disguised into a general by a Corsican adventurer masquerading as an emperor. There is no earthly reason for a D'Hubert to *s'encanailler* by a duel with a person of that sort. You can make your excuses to him perfectly well. And if the *manant* takes into his head to decline them, you may simply refuse to meet him."

"You say I may do that?"

"I do. With the clearest conscience."

"*Monsieur le Chevalier!* To what do you think you have returned from your emigration?"

This was said in such a startling tone that the old man raised sharply his bowed head, glimmering silvery white under the points of the little *tricorne*. For a time he made no sound.

"God knows!" he said at last, pointing with a slow and grave gesture at a tall roadside cross mounted on a block of stone, and stretching its arms of forged iron all black against the darkening red band in the sky—"God knows! If it were not for this emblem, which I remember seeing on this spot as a child, I would wonder to what we who remained

faithful to God and our king have returned. The very voices of the people have changed."

"Yes, it is a changed France," said General D'Hubert. He seemed to have regained his calm. His tone was slightly ironic. "Therefore I cannot take your advice. Besides, how is one to refuse to be bitten by a dog that means to bite? It's impracticable. Take my word for it—Feraud isn't a man to be stayed by apologies or refusals. But there are other ways. I could, for instance, send a messenger with a word to the brigadier of the *gendarmerie* in Senlac. He and his two friends are liable to arrest on my simple order. It would make some talk in the army, both the organized and the disbanded—especially the disbanded. All *canaille!* All once upon a time the companions in arms of Armand D'Hubert. But what need a D'Hubert care what people that don't exist may think. Or, better still, I might get my brother-in-law to send for the mayor of the village and give him a hint. No more would be needed to get the three 'brigands' set upon with flails and pitchforks and hunted into some nice, deep, wet ditch—and nobody the wiser! It has been done only ten miles from here to three poor devils of the disbanded Red Lancers of the Guard going to their homes. What says your conscience, *Chevalier?* Can a D'Hubert do that thing to three men who do not exist?"

A few stars had come out on the blue obscurity, clear as crystal, of the sky. The dry, thin voice of the Chevalier spoke harshly: "Why are you telling me all this?"

The General seized the withered old hand with a

strong grip. "Because I owe you my fullest confidence. Who could tell Adèle but you? You understand why I dare not trust my brother-in-law nor yet my own sister. *Chevalier!* I have been so near doing these things that I tremble yet. You don't know how terrible this duel appears to me. And there's no escape from it."

He murmured after a pause, "It's a fatality," dropped the Chevalier's passive hand, and said in his ordinary conversational voice, "I shall have to go without seconds. If it is my lot to remain on the ground, you at least will know all that can be made known of this affair."

The shadowy ghost of the *ancien régime* seemed to have become more bowed during the conversation. "How am I to keep an indifferent face this evening before these two women?" he groaned. "General! I find it very difficult to forgive you."

General D'Hubert made no answer.

"Is your cause good, at least?"

"I am innocent."

This time he seized the Chevalier's ghostly arm above the elbow, and gave it a mighty squeeze. "I must kill him!" he hissed, and opening his hand strode away down the road.

The delicate attentions of his adoring sister had secured for the General perfect liberty of movement in the house where he was a guest. He had even his own entrance through a small door in one corner of the orangery. Thus he was not exposed that evening to the necessity of dissembling his agitation before the calm ignorance of the other inmates.

He was glad of it. It seemed to him that if he had to open his lips he would break out into horrible and aimless imprecations, start breaking furniture, smashing china and glass. From the moment he opened the private door, and while ascending the twenty-eight steps of a winding staircase, giving access to the corridor on which his room opened, he went through a horrible and humiliating scene in which an infuriated madman with bloodshot eyes and a foaming mouth played inconceivable havoc with everything inanimate that may be found in a well-appointed dining-room. When he opened the door of his apartment the fit was over, and his bodily fatigue was so great that he had to catch at the backs of the chairs while crossing the room to reach a low and broad divan on which he let himself fall heavily. His moral prostration was still greater. That brutality of feeling which he had known only when charging the enemy, sabre in hand, amazed this man of forty, who did not recognize in it the instinctive fury of his menaced passion. But in his mental and bodily exhaustion this passion got cleared, distilled, refined into a sentiment of melancholy despair at having, perhaps, to die before he had taught this beautiful girl to love him.

That night, General D'Hubert stretched out on his back with his hands over his eyes, or lying on his breast with his face buried in a cushion, made the full pilgrimage of emotions. Nauseating disgust at the absurdity of the situation, doubt of his own fitness to conduct his existence, and mistrust of his best sentiments (for what the devil did he want

to go to Fouché for?)—he knew them all in turn. “I am an idiot, neither more nor less,” he thought—“A sensitive idiot. Because I overheard two men talking in a café. . . . I am an idiot afraid of lies—whereas in life it is only truth that matters.”

Several times he got up and, walking in his socks in order not to be heard by anybody downstairs, drank all the water he could find in the dark. And he tasted the torments of jealousy, too. She would marry somebody else. His very soul writhed. The tenacity of that Feraud, the awful persistence of that imbecile brute, came to him with the tremendous force of a relentless destiny. General D’Hubert trembled as he put down the empty water ewer. “He will have me,” he thought. General D’Hubert was tasting every emotion that life has to give. He had in his dry mouth the faint sickly flavor of fear, not the excusable fear before a young girl’s candid and amused glance, but the fear of death and the honorable man’s fear of cowardice.

But if true courage consists in going out to meet an odious danger from which our body, soul, and heart recoil together, General D’Hubert had the opportunity to practise it for the first time in his life. He had charged exultingly at batteries and at infantry squares, and ridden with messages through a hail of bullets without thinking anything about it. His business now was to sneak out unheard, at break of day, to an obscure and revolting death. General D’Hubert never hesitated. He carried two pistols in a leather bag which he slung over his shoulder. Before he had crossed the gar-

den his mouth was dry again. He picked two oranges. It was only after shutting the gate after him that he felt a slight faintness.

He staggered on, disregarding it, and after going a few yards regained the command of his legs. In the colorless and pellucid dawn the wood of pines detached its columns of trunks and its dark green canopy very clearly against the rocks of the gray hillside. He kept his eyes fixed on it steadily, and sucked at an orange as he walked. That temperamental good-humored coolness in the face of danger which had made him an officer liked by his men and appreciated by his superiors was gradually asserting itself. It was like going into battle. Arriving at the edge of the wood, he sat down on a boulder, holding the other orange in his hand, and reproached himself for coming so ridiculously early on the ground. Before very long, however, he heard the swishing of bushes, footsteps on the hard ground, and the sounds of disjointed, loud conversation. A voice somewhere behind him said boastfully: "He's game for my bag."

He thought to himself: "Here they are. What's this about game? Are they talking of me?" And becoming aware of the other orange in his hand, he thought further: "These are very good oranges. Léonie's own tree. I may just as well eat this orange now instead of flinging it away."

Emerging from a wilderness of rocks and bushes, General Feraud and his seconds discovered General D'Hubert engaged in peeling the orange. They stood still, waiting till he looked up. Then the seconds raised their hats, while General Feraud, put-

ting his hands behind his back, walked aside a little way.

"I am compelled to ask one of you, messieurs, to act for me. I have brought no friends. Will you?"

The one-eyed cuirassier said judicially: "That cannot be refused."

The other veteran remarked: "It's awkward all the same."

"Owing to the state of the people's minds in this part of the country there was no one I could trust safely with the object of your presence here," explained General D'Hubert urbanely.

They saluted, looked around, and remarked both together:

"Poor ground."

"It's unfit."

"Why bother about ground, measurements, and so on. Let us simplify matters. Load the two pairs of pistols. I will take those of General Feraud, and let him take mine. Or, better still, let us take a mixed pair. One of each pair. Then let us go into the wood and shoot at sight, while you remain outside. We did not come here for ceremonies, but for war—war to the death. Any ground is good enough for that. If I fall, you must leave me where I lie and clear out. It wouldn't be healthy for you to be found hanging about here after that."

It appeared after a short parley that General Feraud was willing to accept these conditions. While the seconds were loading the pistols, he could be heard whistling, and was seen to rub his hands with perfect contentment. He flung off his coat

briskly, and General D'Hubert took off his own and folded it carefully on a stone.

"Suppose you take your principal to the other side of the wood and let him enter exactly in ten minutes from now," suggested General D'Hubert calmly, but feeling as if he were giving directions for his own execution. This, however, was his last moment of weakness. "Wait. Let us compare watches first."

He pulled out his own. The officer with the chipped nose went over to borrow the watch of General Feraud. They bent their heads over them for a time.

"That's it. At four minutes to six by yours. Seven to by mine."

It was the cuirassier who remained by the side of General D'Hubert, keeping his one eye fixed immovably on the white face of the watch he held in the palm of his hand. He opened his mouth, waiting for the beat of the last second long before he snapped out the word, "*Avancez.*"

General D'Hubert moved on, passing from the glaring sunshine of the Provençal morning into the cool and aromatic shade of the pines. The ground was clear between the reddish trunks, whose multitude, leaning at slightly different angles, confused his eye at first. It was like going into battle. The commanding quality of confidence in himself woke up in his breast. He was all to his affair. The problem was how to kill the adversary. Nothing short of that would free him from this imbecile nightmare. "It's no use wounding that brute," thought General D'Hubert. He was known as a

resourceful officer. His comrades years ago used also to call him The Strategist. And it was a fact that he could think in the presence of the enemy. Whereas Feraud had been always a mere fighter—but a dead shot, unluckily.

"I must draw his fire at the greatest possible range," said General D'Hubert to himself.

At that moment he saw something white moving far off between the trees—the shirt of his adversary. He stepped out at once between the trunks, exposing himself freely; then, quick as lightning, leaped back. It had been a risky move, but it succeeded in its object. Almost simultaneously with the pop of a shot a small piece of bark chipped off by the bullet stung his ear painfully.

General Feraud, with one shot expended, was getting cautious. Peeping round the tree, General D'Hubert could not see him at all. This ignorance of the foe's whereabouts carried with it a sense of insecurity. General D'Hubert felt himself abominably exposed on his flank and rear. Again something white fluttered in his sight. Ha! The enemy was still on his front, then. He had feared a turning movement. But apparently General Feraud was not thinking of it. General D'Hubert saw him pass without special haste from one tree to another in the straight line of approach. With great firmness of mind General D'Hubert stayed his hand. Too far yet. He knew he was no marksman. His must be a waiting game—to kill.

Wishing to take advantage of the greater thickness of the trunk, he sank down to the ground. Extended at full length, head on to his enemy, he had

his person completely protected. Exposing himself would not do now, because the other was too near by this time. A conviction that Feraud would presently do something rash was like balm to General D'Hubert's soul. But to keep his chin raised off the ground was irksome, and not much use, either. He peeped round, exposing a fraction of his head with dread, but really with little risk. His enemy, as a matter of fact, did not expect to see anything of him so far down as that. General D'Hubert caught a fleeting view of General Feraud shifting trees again with deliberate caution. "He despises my shooting," he thought, displaying that insight into the mind of his antagonist which is of such great help in winning battles. He was confirmed in his tactics of immobility. "If I could only watch my rear as well as my front!" he thought anxiously, longing for the impossible.

It required some force of character to lay his pistols down; but, on a sudden impulse, General D'Hubert did this very gently—one on each side of him. In the army he had been looked upon as a bit of a dandy because he used to shave and put on a clean shirt on the days of battle. As a matter of fact he had always been very careful of his personal appearance. In a man of nearly forty, in love with a young and charming girl, this praiseworthy self-respect may run to such little weaknesses as, for instance, being provided with an elegant little leather folding-case containing a small ivory comb, and fitted with a piece of looking-glass on the outside. General D'Hubert, his hands being free, felt in his breeches pockets for that implement of innocent

vanity excusable in the possessor of long silky moustaches. He drew it out, and then with the utmost coolness and promptitude turned himself over on his back. In this new attitude, his head a little raised, holding the little looking-glass just clear of his tree, he squinted into it with his left eye, while the right kept a direct watch on the rear of his position. Thus was proved Napoleon's saying, that "for a French soldier, the word impossible does not exist." He had the right tree nearly filling the field of his little mirror.

"If he moves from behind it," he reflected with satisfaction, "I am bound to see his legs. But in any case he can't come upon me unawares."

And sure enough he saw the boots of General Feraud flash in and out, eclipsing for an instant everything else reflected in the little mirror. He shifted its position accordingly. But having to form his judgment of the change from that indirect view, he did not realize that now his feet and a portion of his legs were in plain sight of General Feraud.

General Feraud had been getting gradually impressed by the amazing cleverness with which his enemy was keeping cover. He had spotted the right tree with bloodthirsty precision. He was absolutely certain of it. And yet he had not been able to glimpse as much as the tip of an ear. As he had been looking for it at the height of about five feet ten inches from the ground, it was no great wonder—but it seemed very wonderful to General Feraud.

The first view of these feet and legs determined

a rush of blood to his head. He literally staggered behind his tree, and had to steady himself against it with his hand. The other was lying on the ground, then! On the ground! Perfectly still, too! Exposed! What could it mean? . . . The notion that he had knocked over his adversary at the first shot entered then General Feraud's head. Once there it grew with every second of attentive gazing, overshadowing every other supposition—irresistible, triumphant, ferocious.

"What an ass I was to think I could have missed him," he muttered to himself. "He was exposed *en plein*—the fool!—for quite a couple of seconds."

General Feraud gazed at the motionless limbs, the last vestiges of surprise fading before an unbounded admiration of his own deadly skill with the pistol.

"Turned up his toes! By the god of war, that was a shot!" he exulted mentally. "Got it through the head, no doubt, just where I aimed, staggered behind that tree, rolled over on his back and died."

And he stared! He stared, forgetting to move, almost awed, almost sorry. But for nothing in the world would he have had it undone. Such a shot!—such a shot! Rolled over on his back and died!

For it was this helpless position, lying on the back, that shouted its direct evidence at General Feraud! It never occurred to him that it might have been deliberately assumed by a living man. It was inconceivable! It was beyond the range of sane supposition. There was no possibility to guess the reason for it. And it must be said, too, that General D'Hu- bert's turned-up feet looked thoroughly dead. General Feraud expanded his lungs for a stentorian

shout to his seconds, but, from what he felt to be an excessive scrupulousness, refrained for a while.

"I will just go and see first whether he breathes yet," he mumbled to himself, leaving carelessly the shelter of his tree. This move was immediately perceived by the resourceful General D'Hubert. He concluded it to be another shift, but when he lost the boots out of the field of the mirror he became uneasy. General Feraud had only stepped a little out of the line, but his adversary could not possibly have supposed him walking up with perfect unconcern. General D'Hubert, beginning to wonder at what had become of the other, was taken unawares so completely that the first warning of danger consisted in the long, early-morning shadow of his enemy falling aslant on his outstretched legs. He had not even heard the footfalls on the soft ground between the trees!

It was too much even for his coolness. He jumped up thoughtlessly, leaving the pistols on the ground. The irresistible instinct of an average man (unless totally paralyzed by discomfiture) would have been to stoop for his weapons, exposing himself to the risk of being shot down in that position. Instinct, of course, is irreflective. It is its very definition. But it may be an inquiry worth pursuing whether in reflective mankind the mechanical promptings of instinct are not affected by the customary mode of thought. In his young days, Armand D'Hubert, the reflective, promising officer, had emitted the opinion that in warfare one should "never cast back on the lines of a mistake." This idea, defended and developed in many discussions, had settled into one

of the stock notions of his brain, had become a part of his mental individuality. Whether it had gone so inconceivably deep as to affect the dictates of his instinct, or simply because, as he himself declared afterward, he was "too scared to remember the confounded pistols," the fact is that General D'Hubert never attempted to stoop for them. Instead of going back on his mistake, he seized the rough trunk with both hands, and swung himself behind it with such impetuosity that, going right round in the very flash and report of the pistol-shot, he reappeared on the other side of the tree face to face with General Feraud. This last, completely unstrung by such a show of agility on the part of a dead man, was trembling yet. A very faint mist of smoke hung before his face which had an extraordinary aspect, as if the lower jaw had come unhinged.

"Not missed!" he croaked hoarsely from the depths of a dry throat.

This sinister sound loosened the spell that had fallen on General D'Hubert's senses. "Yes, missed — *à bout portant*," he heard himself saying, almost before he had recovered the full command of his faculties. The revulsion of feeling was accompanied by a gust of homicidal fury, resuming in its violence the accumulated resentment of a lifetime. For years General D'Hubert had been exasperated and humiliated by an atrocious absurdity imposed upon him by this man's savage caprice. Besides, General D'Hubert had been in this last instance too unwilling to confront death for the reaction of his anguish not to take the shape of a desire to kill. "And I have my two shots to fire yet," he added pitilessly.

General Feraud snapped to his teeth, and his face assumed an irate, undaunted expression. "Go on!" he said grimly.

These would have been his last words if General D'Hubert had been holding the pistols in his hands. But the pistols were lying on the ground at the foot of a pine. General D'Hubert had the second of leisure necessary to remember that he had dreaded death not as a man, but as a lover; not as danger, but as a rival; not as a foe to life, but as an obstacle to marriage. And behold! there was the rival defeated!—utterly defeated, crushed, done for!

He picked up the weapons mechanically, and, instead of firing them into General Feraud's breast, he gave expression to the thought uppermost in his mind, "You will fight no more duels now."

His tone of leisurely, ineffable satisfaction was too much for General Feraud's stoicism. "Don't dawdle, then, damn you for a cold-blooded staff-coxcomb!" he roared out suddenly, out of an impassive face held erect on a rigidly still body.

General D'Hubert uncocked the pistols carefully. This proceeding was observed with mixed feelings by the other general. "You missed me twice," the victor said coolly, shifting both pistols to one hand; "the last time within a foot or so. By every rule of single combat your life belongs to me. That does not mean that I want to take it now."

"I have no use for your forbearance," muttered General Feraud gloomily.

"Allow me to point out that this is no concern of mine," said General D'Hubert, whose every word was dictated by a consummate delicacy of feeling.

In anger he could have killed that man, but in cold blood he recoiled from humiliating by a show of generosity this unreasonable being—a fellow-soldier of the *Grande Armée*, a companion in the wonders and terrors of the great military epic. “You don’t set up the pretension of dictating to me what I am to do with what’s my own.”

General Feraud looked startled, and the other continued: “You’ve forced me on a point of honor to keep my life at your disposal, as it were, for fifteen years. Very well. Now that the matter is decided to my advantage, I am going to do what I like with your life on the same principle. You shall keep it at my disposal as long as I choose. Neither more nor less. You are on your honor till I say the word.”

“I am! But, *sacrebleu!* This is an absurd position for a General of the Empire to be placed in!” cried General Feraud, in accents of profound and dismayed conviction. “It amounts to sitting all the rest of my life with a loaded pistol in a drawer waiting for your word. It’s—it’s idiotic; I shall be an object of—of—derision.”

“Absurd?—idiotic? Do you think so?” queried General D’Hubert with sly gravity. “Perhaps. But I don’t see how that can be helped. However, I am not likely to talk at large of this adventure. Nobody need ever know anything about it. Just as no one to this day, I believe, knows the origin of our quarrel. . . . Not a word more,” he added hastily. “I can’t really discuss this question with a man who, as far as I am concerned, does not exist.”

When the two duellists came out into the open,

General Feraud walking a little behind, and rather with the air of walking in a trance, the two seconds hurried toward them, each from his station at the edge of the wood. General D'Hubert addressed them, speaking loud and distinctly: "Messieurs, I make it a point of declaring to you solemnly, in the presence of General Feraud, that our difference is at last settled for good. You may inform all the world of that fact."

"A reconciliation, after all!" they exclaimed together.

"Reconciliation? Not that exactly. It is something much more binding. Is it not so, General?"

General Feraud only lowered his head in sign of assent. The two veterans looked at each other. Later in the day, when they found themselves alone out of their moody friend's earshot, the cuirassier remarked suddenly: "Generally speaking, I can see with my one eye as far as most people; but this beats me. He won't say anything."

"In this affair of honor I understand there has been from first to last always something that no one in the army could quite make out," declared the chasseur with the imperfect nose. "In mystery it began, in mystery it went on, in mystery it is to end, apparently."

General D'Hubert walked home with long, hasty strides, by no means uplifted by a sense of triumph. He had conquered, yet it did not seem to him that he had gained very much by his conquest. The night before he had grudged the risk of his life which appeared to him magnificent, worthy of preservation as an opportunity to win a girl's love. He

had known moments when, by a marvellous illusion, this love seemed to be already his, and his threatened life a still more magnificent opportunity of devotion. Now that his life was safe it had suddenly lost its special magnificence. It had acquired instead a specially alarming aspect as a snare for the exposure of unworthiness. As to the marvellous illusion of conquered love that had visited him for a moment in the agitated watches of the night, which might have been his last on earth, he comprehended now its true nature. It had been merely a paroxysm of delirious conceit. Thus to this man, sobered by the victorious issue of a duel, life appeared robbed of its charm, simply because it was no longer menaced.

Approaching the house from the back, through the orchard and the kitchen garden, he could not notice the agitation which reigned in front. He never met a single soul. Only while walking softly along the corridor, he became aware that the house was awake and more noisy than usual. Names of servants were being called out down below in a confused noise of coming and going. With some concern he noticed that the door of his own room stood ajar, though the shutters had not been opened yet. He had hoped that his early excursion would have passed unperceived. He expected to find some servant just gone in; but the sunshine filtering through the usual cracks enabled him to see lying on the low divan something bulky, which had the appearance of two women clasped in each other's arms. Tearful and desolate murmurs issued mysteriously from that appearance. General D'Hubert pulled open

the nearest pair of shutters violently. One of the women then jumped up. It was his sister. She stood for a moment with her hair hanging down and her arms raised straight up above her head and, then flung herself with a stifled cry into his arms. He returned her embrace, trying at the same time to disengage himself from it. The other woman had not risen. She seemed, on the contrary, to cling closer to the divan, hiding her face in the cushions. Her hair was also loose; it was admirably fair. General D'Hubert recognized it with staggering emotion. Mademoiselle de Valmassigue! Adèle! In distress!

He became greatly alarmed, and got rid of his sister's hug definitely. Madame Léonie then extended her shapely bare arm out of her *peignoir*, pointing dramatically at the divan. "This poor, terrified child has rushed here from home, on foot, two miles—running all the way."

"What on earth has happened?" asked General D'Hubert in a low, agitated voice.

But Madame Léonie was speaking loudly. "She rang the great bell at the gate and roused all the household—we were all asleep yet. You may imagine what a terrible shock. . . . Adèle, my dear child, sit up."

General D'Hubert's expression was not that of a man who "imagines" with facility. He did, however, fish out of the chaos of surmises the notion that his prospective mother-in-law had died suddenly, but only to dismiss it at once. He could not conceive the nature of the event or the catastrophe which could induce Mademoiselle de Valmassigue,

living in a house full of servants, to bring the news over the fields herself, two miles, running all the way.

"But why are you in this room?" he whispered, full of awe.

"Of course, I ran up to see, and this child . . . I did not notice it . . . she followed me. It's that absurd Chevalier," went on Madame Léonie, looking toward the divan. . . . "Her hair is all come down. You may imagine she did not stop to call her maid to dress it before she started. . . . Adèle, my dear, sit up. . . . He blurted it all out to her at half-past five in the morning. She woke up early and opened her shutters to breathe the fresh air, and saw him sitting collapsed on a garden bench at the end of the great alley. At that hour—you may imagine! And the evening before he had declared himself indisposed. She hurried on some clothes and flew down to him. One would be anxious for less. He loves her, but not very intelligently. He had been up all night, fully dressed, the poor old man, perfectly exhausted. He wasn't in a state to invent a plausible story. . . . What a confidant you chose there! My husband was furious. He said: 'We can't interfere now.' So we sat down to wait. It was awful! And this poor child running with her hair loose over here publicly! She has been seen by some people in the fields. She has roused the whole household, too. It's awkward for her. Luckily you are to be married next week. . . . Adèle, sit up. He has come home on his own legs. . . . We expected to see you coming on a stretcher, perhaps—what do I know? Go and see if the carriage is ready. I

must take this child home at once. It isn't proper for her to stay here a minute longer."

General D'Hubert did not move. It was as though he had heard nothing. Madame Léonie changed her mind. "I will go and see myself," she cried. "I want also my cloak. Adèle——" she began, but did not add "sit up." She went out saying, in a very loud and cheerful tone: "I leave the door open."

General D'Hubert made a movement toward the divan, but then Adèle sat up, and that checked him dead. He thought, "I haven't washed this morning. I must look like an old tramp. There's earth on the back of my coat and pine-needles in my hair." It occurred to him that the situation required a good deal of circumspection on his part.

"I am greatly concerned, mademoiselle," he began vaguely, and abandoned that line. She was sitting up on the divan with her cheeks unusually pink and her hair, brilliantly fair, falling over her shoulders—which was a very novel sight to the General. He walked away up the room, and looking out of the window for safety, said: "I fear you must think I behaved like a madman," in accents of sincere despair. Then he spun round, and noticed that she had followed him with her eyes. They were not cast down on meeting his glance. And the expression of her face was novel to him also. It was, one might have said, reversed. Those eyes looked at him with grave thoughtfulness, while the exquisite lines of her mouth seemed to suggest a restrained smile. This change made her transcendental beauty much less mysterious, much more

accessible to a man's comprehension. An amazing ease of mind came to the General—and even some ease of manner. He walked down the room with as much pleasurable excitement as he would have found in walking up to a battery vomiting death, fire, and smoke; then stood looking down with smiling eyes at the girl whose marriage with him (next week) had been so carefully arranged by the wise, the good, the admirable Léonie.

"Ah! mademoiselle," he said, in a tone of courtly regret, "if only I could be certain that you did not come here this morning, two miles, running all the way, merely from affection for your mother."

He waited for an answer imperturbable but inwardly elated. It came in a demure murmur, eyelashes lowered with fascinating effect: "You must not be *méchant* as well as mad."

And then General D'Hubert made an aggressive movement toward the divan which nothing could check. That piece of furniture was not exactly in the line of the open door. But Madame Léonie, coming back wrapped up in a light cloak and carrying a lace shawl on her arm for Adèle to hide her incriminating hair under, had a swift impression of her brother getting up from his knees.

"Come along, my dear child," she cried from the doorway.

The General, now himself again in the fullest sense, showed the readiness of a resourceful cavalry officer and the peremptoriness of a leader of men. "You don't expect her to walk to the carriage," he said indignantly. "She isn't fit. I shall carry her downstairs."

This he did slowly, followed by his awed and respectful sister; but he rushed back like a whirlwind to wash off all the signs of the night of anguish and the morning of war, and to put on the festive garments of a conqueror before hurrying over to the other house. Had it not been for that, General D'Hubert felt capable of mounting a horse and pursuing his late adversary in order simply to embrace him from excess of happiness. "I owe it all to this stupid brute," he thought. "He has made plain in a morning what might have taken me years to find out—for I am a timid fool. No self-confidence whatever. Perfect coward. And the Chevalier! Delightful old man!" General D'Hubert longed to embrace him also.

The Chevalier was in bed. For several days he was very unwell. The men of the Empire and the post-revolution young ladies were too much for him. He got up the day before the wedding, and, being curious by nature, took his niece aside for a quiet talk. He advised her to find out from her husband the true story of the affair of honor, whose claim, so imperative and so persistent, had led her to within an ace of tragedy. "It is right that his wife should be told. And next month or so will be your time to learn from him anything you want to know, my dear child."

Later on, when the married couple came on a visit to the mother of the bride, Madame la Générale D'Hubert communicated to her beloved old uncle the true story she had obtained without any difficulty from her husband.

The Chevalier listened with deep attention to the

end, took a pinch of snuff, flicked the grains of tobacco from the frilled front of his shirt, and asked calmly, "And that's all it was!"

"Yes, uncle," replied Madame la Générale, opening her pretty eyes very wide. "Isn't it funny? *C'est insensé*—to think what men are capable of!"

"H'm!" commented the old *émigré*. "It depends what sort of men. That Bonaparte's soldiers were savages. It is *insensé*. As a wife, my dear, you must believe implicitly what your husband says."

But to Léonie's husband the Chevalier confided his true opinion. "If that's the tale the fellow made up for his wife, and during the honeymoon, too, you may depend on it that no one will ever know now the secret of this affair."

Considerably later still, General D'Hubert judged the time come, and the opportunity propitious to write a letter to General Feraud. This letter began by disclaiming all animosity. "I've never," wrote the General Baron D'Hubert, "wished for your death during all the time of our deplorable quarrel. Allow me," he continued, "to give you back in all form your forfeited life. It is proper that we two, who have been partners in so much military glory, should be friendly to each other publicly."

The same letter contained also an item of domestic information. It was in reference to this last that General Feraud answered from a little village on the banks of the Garonne, in the following words:

"If one of your boy's names had been Napoleon—or Joseph—or even Joachim, I could congratulate you on the event with a better heart. As you have thought proper to give him the names of Charles

Henri Armand, I am confirmed in my conviction that you *never* loved the Emperor. The thought of that sublime hero chained to a rock in the middle of a savage ocean makes life of so little value that I would receive with positive joy your instructions to blow my brains out. From suicide I consider myself in honor debarred. But I keep a loaded pistol in my drawer."

Madame la Générale D'Hubert lifted up her hands in despair after perusing that answer.

"You see? He *won't* be reconciled," said her husband. "He must never, by any chance, be allowed to guess where the money comes from. It wouldn't do. He couldn't bear it."

"You are a *brave homme*, Armand," said Madame la Générale appreciatively.

"My dear, I had the right to blow his brains out; but as I didn't, we can't let him starve. He has lost his pension and he is utterly incapable of doing anything in the world for himself. We must take care of him, secretly, to the end of his days. Don't I owe him the most ecstatic moment of my life? . . . Ha! ha! ha! Over the fields, two miles, running all the way! I couldn't believe my ears! . . . But for his stupid ferocity, it would have taken me years to find you out. It's extraordinary how in one way or another this man has managed to fasten himself on my deeper feelings."

Captain Wardlaw's Kitbags



HAROLD MACGRATH

Captain Wardlaw's Kitbags

CHAPTER I

IN THE beginning—it was in the pre-war days—there was a street-fight at night on Broadway, before a famous restaurant, a fight in which nobody was seriously hurt and over the spectacular ending of which there was a cackle of laughter.

Some Yale students had come to town to celebrate an athletic victory. They had broken up into army groups, as the saying goes these days, and the most turbulent group had invaded Broadway. They set all that territory by the ears and missed jail a dozen times because they could run faster than the police. They finally gathered before the restaurant, doddering as to whether they should go on or in, when one of them discovered the basic ingredients of a riot. It was a private coupé waiting at the curb. The man on the box, in shining brass buttons and buff, stared ahead erect and detached, his whip at rest.

“Pipe the sea-goer and the captain on the bridge!”

“Let’s navigate the old hooker up to the Park and back!”

"You've said something!"

The youngsters surged toward the coupé and stated their demands. The coachman wisely pretended not to hear. One of the students ran out and caught the horse by the bit. The coachman stood up.

"Stand off!" he warned.

"Down from the bridge!"

The coachman immediately began to lay about with his whip—which was an exceedingly unwise thing to do. His action made it imperative for the honor of Old Eli to drive that coupé to Central Park.

If there was a policeman near by, he decided that one of the finest was not equal to twenty-odd of the wildest.

The coachman was finally pulled from the box. Suddenly the vortex became a series of eddies, as if a strong current had burst into it from an unexpected source. At the far side a silk hat appeared, and it moved determinedly toward the curb and the unhappy coachman. The bystanders—typical New Yorkers who never meddle with events which do not concern them intimately—saw the students stagger about like tenpins before they understood that a rescue was going toward. Presently some of the bystanders caught a glimpse of the stranger's face, and one of them recognized the tanned, handsome countenance with its crisp little military mustache. At least his neighbors heard him mutter a single word—"Wardlaw!"

"Just a moment, boys!"

"Break away, there!"

"On your way, Mr. Buttinski! We're going to have that hack!"

"All right. You can drive it to the Park if you want to. But do you really want to—now?"

The bystanders automatically pressed closer. Here was something really interesting. Several of the older men recognized an unusual fact in the drawling words. Yonder cool individual possessed an uncanny insight into the psychology of student minds. The boys could, having a large majority, take the coupé wherever they pleased; but why take it, now their power was thus frankly acknowledged?

"Well, here's the old hooker. Do you want to walk over me to it? Easy as falling off a log. You're twenty to one. But will it be worth while? Some of us are due to get mussed up. And think of all the lights you haven't seen yet. What's the good word?"

"Three cheers for Old Eli, and you win!"

"Three times three, if you like!"

"Bully for the plug hat!"

Some bystander laughed. The laugh was caught up and carried around the half-circle. Those students closest to the stranger eyed him speculatively. Any man who could charge through them the way this one had—without even losing his hat—was worthy of respect. Still, it wasn't the strong arm; it was the fearless attitude, the readiness to combat and the friendly counsel. A student laughed, another and another.

"All right, Mr. Buttinski; consider your—

self tapped for Bones. Come on, boys! We *could* have done it!"

Magically the jam broke into small groups; and the north stream and the south stream of Broadway resumed its flow.

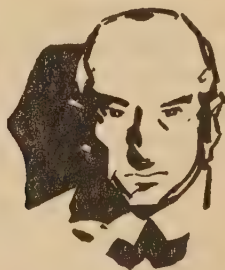
The stranger helped the coachman to his box.

"Hurt?"

"Shaken up a bit, sir. Nothing serious. Thank you, sir."

"A word of advice. With a mob like that, always surrender at once. They didn't really want to drive your coupé; they only wanted to prove they could. Good night."

Now, this trivial incident set into motion an implacable hate and an insatiable curiosity, and was in due season to react upon the agricultural future of some four hundred million Chinese. All of which forces me to deduce that there is no such thing as a trivial incident, that one and all are deliberate moves toward preconceived ends, whether these ends be love or war or business.



CHAPTER II

ON A certain brilliant autumn afternoon, a rickety station victoria drew up at the curb in front of Sheppard's Hotel in Cairo and deposited Captain John Wardlaw, late of the Engineers, but now the practical head of the Hong Kong branch of the Oriental Construction Company of New York.

Military and political titles have an odd way of sticking. Nearly twelve years had been filed away since Wardlaw resigned his commission; yet from Vladivostok to Manila, from Cairo to Yokohama, he was still addressed as "Captain" by those who knew him.

His luggage consisted of two kitbags—small leather trunks, if you wish, that one can carry on trains, in the racks, where they threaten to fall at every turn and crush the passengers below. They were tolerably battered and belabeled. The Captain took charge of one of the bags, despite the porter's protest, and staggered up the terrace steps, past the indifferently interested tea-drinkers.

Some British officers in polo-togs, however, stared curiously. For Wardlaw always gave the impression of being an officer in mufti. The swing of his stride, the straightforward-

ness of his approach, the tilt of his chin and the resolute gleam in his blue eyes were essentially military. A man cannot successfully imitate this military suggestion; nor, once having been trained to it, can he discard it at will. It becomes an integral part of his character; like hammered brass, it cannot be wholly smoothed out.

He glanced neither right nor left but made straight for the entrance, the clumsy kitbag banging against the calf of his leg. The many young women sent mildly speculative glances over their teacups. They would have been genuinely astonished had they discovered that from the curb to the door, Wardlaw's traverse had been one of terror and misery. In the cool, dim office he dropped the bag for a moment, removed his Panama and wiped his forehead. Well, he had run the gamut without stumbling or falling down. He was certainly getting on in the world.

"Room and bath, reserved for John Wardlaw."

"We have the room, Mr. Wardlaw."

The clerk passed out a key, which Wardlaw gave to the porter. At once the porter started for the stairs.

"Any mail?"

"A moment, please." The clerk went through a stack of letters. "Here is a cable for you, sir."

Wardlaw put the cable unopened into a pocket, picked up his bag and walked over to the elevator, which he entered.

A little yellow man, with the humorously

tilted eyes which are singularly humorless, got up from the lounge and sauntered over to the desk.

"Who was that gentleman who got into the lift?" he asked in flawless English.

"Captain John Wardlaw, Hong Kong. You are leaving to-morrow, Mr. Huroki?"

"Oh, yes."

Mr. Huroki then hurried way to the billiard room, where he interrupted a game between two of his compatriots. The three talked in low tones; and the two players appeared to agree with everything Mr. Huroki said. At length he walked away, and the two resumed their game.

Outside, another victoria had arrived. Steamer-trunks, bandboxes, small bags, and kitbags flowed from the curb to the entrance. The person to whom these belonged stepped down—as Aurora might have stepped down from one of her clouds—settled with the driver and walked leisurely to the terrace.

Twenty pairs of masculine eyes widened joyfully and hopefully, and forty pairs of feminine eyes narrowed, presumably because it was instinctive that they should. To any one woman the beauty of another is a menace.

Inasmuch as Captain Wardlaw was presently to become the shuttlecock in a rather amazing game of double battledore, it is not out of order to digress for a moment to point out certain characteristics of the man, since in their application hangs this tale. There are some men who cannot help it any more than

they can help breathing. It is strongly written in the corpuscle. Brave as lions, valiant as Palladins, they walk in fear of women. Bearded metaphysicians and bulgy-browed psychologists mull over the question, look wise and say nothing. What can they say? Quicksilver is visible, a substance, but you can't pick it up with your fingers, can you? It is an unapproachable subject that man born of woman should be afraid of women. There is nothing logical about it, no handhold for analysis; it is the antithesis of nature's plans. The unspeakable misery of a bashful man! And we are all of us cruel enough to make sport of this affliction. Soldiers, statesmen, sailors, explorers, ready to face inconceivable dangers and hardships, and equally ready to trail their coat-tails on the wind at the sight of a pretty woman!

And so it was with Wardlaw, who went hither and thither across the world, grossly libeled as a woman-hater, when in truth he hated only himself. He was an only child; and the god of malice, always at odds with the human race, never fails to pounce upon the only child; the result is that the only child invariably has some peculiar twist in its make-up. Wardlaw's was bashfulness.

In conjunction with this bashfulness—in-sult to injury, as it were—there was an almost childish romanticism. He was as full of romance as a Chinese water-chestnut is full of starch. He had the creative mind of a Dumas and was as inarticulate as the *Lone Fisherman* in "Evangeline." Once, in Simla, he

had become acquainted with an American astronomer who had just come down from the lesser Himalayas with his observations; and one afternoon at tiffin Wardlaw laid bare the truth.

"Ah!" mused the scientist. "The petty disturbance of collective thought. Subjugated easily enough. Will-power."

"I've got all the will-power in the world; but I can't talk to them."

"Force yourself to break the ice, and you won't find the water so cold."

"I tried that once, in pure desperation. The boat was leaving Colombo. I saw a pretty girl at the rail, screwed up my courage, boldly approached her and opened up on the weather." Wardlaw grinned as he recollected the episode. "She greeted me with a how-dare-you! And then her brother—nine foot high and seven broad—stepped up and asked if he should knock my block off. I never tried it again."

"Mere piffle!" declared the professor.

"You go to the deuce!"

"Once never proves anything; it's twice and thrice that lands you somewhere. You'd find that out if you'd try hard enough. You don't hate 'em?"

"Lord love you, no! Why, I've got a girl picked out in every port, like *Billee Taylor*, but I can't get any nearer than telescope range."

"Interesting case, but nevertheless piffling."

"I came to you for advice."

"I'm giving it," replied the professor

blandly. "You'll never get anywhere by wishing. Play the cave-man."

"And get my head knocked off by her brother? Thanks!"

"Pick out one that hasn't any brother," said the professor with a chuckle.

"I say, that's worth thinking over," Wardlaw admitted soberly.

He was thirty-seven years old, kitless and kinless. At that age a bashful man is rather hopeless. In his selected field he was a real genius, a master of men, tireless, inventive, courageous, a man who undertook Herculean jobs and completed them without talk, without fanfare. He was really the kind of hero young women dream about, millions and millions of them, hopefully at seventeen, somewhat doubtfully at twenty, and cynically at thirty.

A bashful man generally has some physical defect to begin with. He is hard of hearing; he is nearsighted; or he possesses a dull, unattractive countenance. He begins by imagining that his defects are glaring, that when people smile they are smiling at him. But Wardlaw's defect was purely mental, and was quite as inexplicable to himself as to his friends; for physically he was a handsome man.

His fear of women had walked beside him since boyhood. In all his years he had known the companionship of but one woman, his mother, who had died shortly after his appointment to West Point. He did not accept this blight pacifically. He fought it dog-

gedly, year in and year out, but always hopelessly. On the other side of the medal, he was not afraid of any man or beast that walked on two legs or four, or the biggest job that a man could tackle. But a woman!

Call it odd, but his success was more or less due to this bashfulness. The Oriental Construction Company, when it turned over plans and specifications to John Wardlaw, knew that only death itself could hinder him from completing the task. The man who held the destinies of the O. C. C. in his hands carried a private record of men whom the Far East had broken beyond repair because they had not been afraid of women.

After leaving West Point, Wardlaw had spent three grilling years in the Philippines. He was fond of military life, but he understood that it would take years and politics to reach any height worth while, and he wanted to get into the middle of things while he was young. In other words, his ambition reached out beyond what Uncle Sam could do for him.

One afternoon in Manila he was introduced to a guest of the club, a big man, with fine eyes and a mellow persuasive voice—Henry Ainslee, the head of one of the greatest engineering concerns in the world. The outcome of this chance meeting was Wardlaw's resignation from the Engineers and a start toward real fame and fortune. He built bridges, breakwaters, canals, oil-wells, reservoirs, and railroads. Thus, to date, he had toiled arduously for fifteen years in the Far East, where fibres loosen quickly and morals become ex-

pediencies; yet his flesh had not softened, nor his morals. Only three times had he returned to his native land in these fifteen years.

The head office in New York was rather a nebulous concern to him. Of the three men in control, he knew only Ainslee intimately. Clarke, the general manager, and his nephew Carrington, the supply man, he knew scarcely at all, a condition of affairs due to the immense distance between Hong Kong and New York, whether you faced east or west. If he knew Ainslee well, it was because Ainslee was an inveterate traveler and took keen pleasure in visiting the scenes of various enterprises under construction. Owning a fast sea-going yacht, it was nothing for Ainslee to coal up and set out upon a thirteen-thousand-mile voyage. Regularly, once a year, he turned up in Hong Kong.

Thus, Wardlaw's affections had instantly gone out to Ainslee. The millionaire drew him irresistibly. He sensed the big soul behind the amiability, the genuineness of the ideals that had made the O. C. C. an example for others to follow.

Ainslee had a way—rather embarrassing to delinquents—of popping in upon one unannounced. There was one occasion Wardlaw would always remember. He had been putting up oil-pumps in Burma, and who should step off the Irrawaddy packet but the old boy himself. For two weeks Ainslee hovered at Wardlaw's elbow, and it was only on the night of his departure by train to Rangoon that the young engineer recalled the amazing fact that

during all this time Ainslee had never offered advice.

"Son," said Ainslee suddenly, just as the train was about to move, "you've delivered the goods. When a man doesn't ask me for advice and I don't offer it, he doesn't need it. When this job is done, you will proceed to Hong Kong and take charge of that office. Shake 'em up. Find men who are congenial to you. Your salary will be ten thousand a year. And on the day you ask me for a raise I'll fire you. Good luck and good-by!"

Nothing more than that. Wardlaw remembered going back to his camp in a kind of amethystine haze. From a hundred to two hundred, with a mere wave of the hand like that! But from that day forth Wardlaw went about his world establishing engineering precedents. He finished jobs before time-limits, and he never had to go back to patch up hurried work. He took Ainslee's warning seriously, but each Christmas he would find a few shares on his desk. It was sheer happiness to work for a man like that.

He knew Clarke, the general manager, to be a hard driver. After several years of reading a man's correspondence, it is possible to reconstruct him mentally and physically. A gray bullet for a head, a thin mouth, an eagle's beak for a nose, a dynamo made up of human coils—that was Clarke as Wardlaw had drawn him visually; and his astonishment was profound when he saw that the real Clarke filled out the imaginative lines neatly. But he did not like Clarke; he only admired him.

It was the same with Craig Carrington, the nephew. Wardlaw admired him, but did not like him. There was too much calculation, too little spontaneity in his letters. But as a supply man he had no peer in America, young as he was. In constructing him by mail, however, Wardlaw had missed the target completely. Upon his first return to New York he had found an exceedingly handsome young man, suave and blasé, who preferred New York to adventure, money to ideals.

There was a certain guilelessness about Wardlaw. Because he was the soul of honor, he believed everybody else to be. As yet, he had never really fallen afoul a business intrigue, and so his illusions were still untarnished. That for six years, now, Carrington had been adroitly placing obstacles in his path, delaying materials, was undreamed of by Wardlaw. Like all shy, diffident men, he was incurious. The little ripples of office politics never touched him, or if they did, passed unnoticed. He went his way serenely, overcoming obstacles as they fell, taking it for granted that certain delays and obstructions were acts of God instead of man.

So much for the man—the shuttlecock of this tale. The woman, having arrived, let us spin the whirligig. Women! What should we do without them? And what is more to the point these days, what shall we men do *with* them?

CHAPTER III

IF I have called the man the shuttlecock, I might with equal liberty call the woman the feather in the wind. Immediately upon entering her room, she undressed and took a bath. She even washed her head; and if you are a woman, you'll appreciate the risk she took; there being but two scant hours before dinner. She came forth rosy and resolute, dressed in a wonderful peacock kimono. From a small satchel she took out a contrivance resembling a comb which could be electrically heated. Thus, by six o'clock, her hair was perfectly dry. Women build up their hair and then get into their gowns, which is a procedure no man will ever fully comprehend.

Next she brought out four gowns and laid them on the bed. Then she walked up and down past them like a general reviewing his troops—which is not a bad simile, if you'll think it over. Bird of paradise, yellow-warbler, thrush and blackbird; she finally decided upon the blackbird, because, perhaps, her mood at this moment was inclined toward sombre things.

The decision made, she produced a small book, sat down before the little writing-table and began slowly to write, referring to the

book at the completion of each word. Ten minutes later she summoned a maid, giving her three sovereigns and the message she had written so laboriously.

"Send this cable at once and bring me the receipt. Such change as remains you may keep."

"Yes, madame."

Under the first light she came to, the maid attempted to read the message. But she did not succeed. It was a jumble of English words, each understandable in itself but collectively as illuminating as the hieroglyphics on the queen's tomb at Karnac.

Speaking of affinity of ideas: Wardlaw also took to the tub. He washed his hair, too, and dried it in two minutes. The ride up from Alexandria, always dusty, had been unusually so to-day. Gusty east winds had rioted all day across the desert bluffs. There was fine sand in his hair, in his ears and his mustache. After the bath he wrapped himself in a Chinese gown of silk brocade—the color of which signified that, good Chinaman that he was, he was worshipping the recent demise of his grandfather—and opened his cable. It was in code and from Ainslee, dated at Hong Kong. Eagerly he got out his code-book, drew a chair up to the table and commenced to decode the message, confident that all the fog of the past few weeks would be promptly dissipated.

Engineers of Wardlaw's calibre are more or less secret agents of big business. The golden text is: "Keep your own secret,

out what the other fellow is going to do, and beat him to it." In these colossal engineering enterprises international politics was always intermeddling and contravening; America, England, Germany, and Japan fought each other continually in the Far East, and none of them was particularly scrupulous as to methods when many millions were involved. Wardlaw had escaped actual contact with this phase because Ainslee always handled that side of the business, being the prince of diplomats and negotiators.

It took Wardlaw a quarter of an hour to decode the message; but the final sentence, complete in itself, refused to disintegrate. Wardlaw scrubbed his chin impatiently. But for the keen phrasing of the main message, the hidden message would have looked like a joke, rather a silly one, too. "How old was Cupid?" Was that straight English, and if so, what was Ainslee trying to say? He was about to give up the riddle, when he recalled the addendum to the office code, really a personal code between himself and Ainslee, rarely used by either. The banal inquiry became a sinister warning. "Beware the little yellow men." This warning, in conjunction with what he had already translated, was illuminating.

He applied a match to both cable and translation, crumpled the black ash into powder and blew it from the ash-try. Then, with his hands behind his back, he paced his room. He was not a man given to flares; he was exceedingly economical in his gestures; but

never had such rage burned in his heart as at this moment.

The infernal black crookedness of it! The name wiped off the records, the fleet's blue flag with its white diagonal stripe cleared off the seas, the O. C. C. a memory! To throw an honorable and profitable business on the rocks because a few men had ideas instead of an Idea! To freeze out Henry Ainslee and relegate him to the shelf, to merge the O. C. C. with the General Construction, which was controlled by a clique of callous stock-jobbers: so that was it! This was the fog he had been stumbling through blindly! And why had the old boy kept him in the dark until this moment?

He filled and lighted his pipe, and a trail of blue smoke eddied and swirled after him. Ainslee ill, and Clarke, Carrington and their followers snarling at his heels—the lowest kind of treachery! And the future of the O. C. C. depended solely upon John Wardlaw's ability to get to Hong Kong on a certain date. That was enough. John Wardlaw would get to Hong Kong.

"If this deal falls, we fall with it. I hate to lug you into a game like this. But I need you. It isn't the money; they never can get to me deeply enough there to hurt me. It's the Idea that grew out of that old theodolite back in my study. Old Dick Cameron and I carried that across the Chilean Andes thirty-three years ago. Old Dick is dead, and now they mark me for the shelf. I've been ill, son; and I have had to use my illness as a

cloak. I let Clarke have the idea that I was breaking down mentally. But the old dog has one bite left, as he shall find. The truth is, they are mighty near their goal. I've controlled the O. C. C. because, since Cameron died, I've had the power to vote the estate's holdings. They have secretly hammered the Middale Steel—Cameron's old pet—until the Cameron holdings in the O. C. C. have been bitten into dangerously. They need but a few hundred shares to swing the merger next March—only seven months away. And if we fail in China, even those loyal to me will go over to the enemy.

"When they recalled you to New York—you will recollect my cable to keep mum—you must have let something out of the bag. Perhaps I should have made my warning more explicit, but I was ill. I wanted to get to sea, where I could act unwatched. They pumped something out of you, anyhow. You are not used to business intrigue, and those two are. I've had a detective on their heels for weeks. Clarke's own stenographer is on my side, and it was through her I learned that Carrington had anonymously tipped the Japanese consulate at Naples; and the Japs have no love for you since you beat them out on the Hu-peh canals. They have marked China down for their own, and our one hope lies in the sullen bitterness of the Chinese Government. It's up to you to keep the old plate going. This scheme was originally yours, so I've no one to bank on but you. Get to me."

The old plate! Wardlaw would never for-

get the single dinner he had had at Ainslee's, nine years ago. They had gone into the study for coffee and cigars, and the old boy had pointed to the wall above the bookshelves. "See that, son?"

It was a bit of bronze a foot long and three inches wide. In embossed letters ran these words: THE ORIENTAL CONSTRUCTION COMPANY OF NEW YORK.

"Young man, that's more than a piece of bronze; it's an Idea. In Africa, in South America, in India, in Siam, in China, in the South Seas, you'll find that plate embedded in cement. Behind it, in invisible letters, you'll see the word *Service*. I have seen cities grow up beside that plate; great ships have found safety and haven behind it. It has made history; it has opened up wildernesses to humanity. With me the money is nothing; the Idea is everything. Always keep that plate in your mind's eye."

Wardlaw went over the past month, his arrival in New York, his interview with Clarke and Carrington. He hadn't been with them ten minutes before he had stepped into their clever trap—indirectly, the old boy's fault. Had this cable arrived that day in Hong Kong, he would never have returned to New York, despite Clarke's peremptory orders; he would have had at his elbow a thousand legitimate excuses to remain where he was. Well, the damage was done. "Watch your kitbags. Beware the little yellow men." So be it!

He repacked the kitbag from which he had taken the code-book, but left out his service-

able revolver, which he laid on the stand between the two windows, covering it with a newspaper. Then he tiptoed to the door, opening it suddenly. The corridor was empty. Next he approached the door which led into the adjoining room. This was locked. He listened intently. Evidently the next room was unoccupied; otherwise he would have heard the occupants stirring about at this hour.

The kitbag he himself had carried up he placed by the side of the bed. He took one of the pillows off and hid it behind the bathtub. Under the first sheet he laid the kitbag sidewise, covering it with the second sheet and drawing up the counter-pane in such a fashion as to deceive any eye but that of an experienced chambermaid.

This work completed to his satisfaction, he began to dress for dinner. The old military habit still clung to him. When in civilized parts of the world, he was somewhat of a dandy in regard to his clothes. At length he picked up his pipe and pouch, set his Panama jauntily and started for the door. Once there, he turned and sent a glance about the room. He turned, set the remaining kitbag on the centre-table, dusted the lock with talc and went out, leaving the lights on; a light seen through a transom, always suggests that the room beyond is occupied. He left word at the office not to permit the maid to enter the room to turn the sheets. At half after seven he entered the dining room.

It was late October. The season in Cairo was just beginning. The dining room was

filled with beautiful women from all over the world. The dazzling shoulders and arms, the flash and sparkle of gems, the wonderful heads of hair, each with its individualistic touch, ranging from blue-black to spun amber—it was an entrancing picture to Wardlaw.

He followed the head waiter in and out among the tables, hearing a snatch of conversation here, a tinkle of laughter there, scenting violet and rose and orris-root, and sometimes accidentally touching a gleaming shoulder. He was given a single table by the wall, a situation which pleased him. From this point of vantage he could feast his eyes to his heart's content.

Women, he mused. What was the matter with him? What had been the matter with him all these lonely years? From whom had he inherited his infernal diffidence? The misery of those early days in Manila, when they dragged him out to dinners and dances, his brother officers, and left him high and dry with his back to the wall! Homely men, brutes, namby-pambies, pretty fellows, one and all of them possessed the courage to engage a woman in ordinary conversation, while he, John Wardlaw, could only sputter like cannel coal. Why? And yet, if this affinity-talk amounted to anything, there was a girl for him somewhere. But would he know her when he saw her? Would he wait for her to catch up, or would he take to his heels as he always did?

Little yellow men. It was sobering. He knew the Japanese more than ordinarily well.

Once they embarked against this project, they would stop at nothing. They had been everywhere in China. What a time he and his boys had had in getting out of Peking unnoticed, unfollowed! And yet they had been followed. That street-riot in Fen-chow hadn't been accidental. O'Holleran's theodolite had been smashed by someone who knew what it was. And then there was that Jap he had found in his room at Ah Fuch's teahouse in Kung-chang-Fu. All this, no doubt, on a basis that John Wardlaw was well worth watching! But he had fooled them. He had done the surveying from the Tsaidam Swamps toward the coast. From the real beginning until they finally landed in Shanghai, not a suspicious interruption of any kind. They had suffered a lot of physical discomforts, to be sure, and had had a narrow escape from typhoid, which the white man will ever find at his elbow in China; and they had had months of hunger. But they had done the job.

Because of the aggressive and suspicious attitude of the Japanese, they had been forced to go at this adventure from a new angle. Ordinarily you went to the Chinese Government—always kindly toward Americans—and got your concession, all your powers of authority, rights of way, and so forth; then you shouldered your theodolite. Thus they had put the cart before the horse, covertly. A secret expedition over two thousand miles of a China few white men knew anything about, on foot, in pole-chairs and bullock-carts, crawling along at a hundred odd miles the month,

across mountains, down valleys, over rivers, skirting deserts and marshes, sleeping in dog-tents, half frozen at night and always hungry—a colossal venture which must have stirred the shade of Hercules. And a whispered word would have knocked the whole thing higher than Wu's dragon kite. And he, O'Holleran, Chedsoye, and Jones—they had done the job!

A business intrigue! After an immortal adventure, sordidness! Treachery from the inside. Beyond supercaution, Wardlaw knew he possessed no talent for this quality of adventure. He built things; he didn't tear them down. For twenty-odd days he would be at sea, guarding against the unknown. The Japs were patient beyond a white man's understanding; they were not only inscrutable, but proud and fearless and merciless—and vain. They had marked China for themselves, and woe to the meddler!

Carrington! Wardlaw's jaws knotted combatively. So his dislike for Carrington had been based upon something worthily instinctive. And, irony of fate, he had, in a burst of pardonable enthusiasm, shown the ace in his sleeve to that cold, handsome, calculating intriguer. He had said: "Five years!" And Carrington, first-rate engineer that he was, despite his cold-bloodedness, had instantly grasped the truth of the stupendous task practically completed by four tireless, resolute, loyal men. And that he was going to use this knowledge for his own private ends was made clear in Ainslee's warning.

He was sorry and depressed, but he did not blame himself wholly. Ainslee should have been more explicit in his first cable; and even this lack of foresight was excusable, since the old boy was ill. Clarke had told him that, and had even dared to add that Ainslee's mind was giving away. It was one of those singular twists of fate which no man may successfully avoid.

Why had they permitted him to come thus far unmolested? Half the journey done, and not an enemy in sight. Perhaps it was the old story; east of Suez strange things happened that were never solved. Victory lay in the bottom of that kitbag, and he would carry it into the Hong Kong office, on a certain date, in face of a hundred Mikados.

He ate his dinner leisurely. When the sirupy coffee was set before him, he lighted a cigar. Some day, after he retired from active service—and men of Wardlaw's stamp are always retiring and dying in harness—he would spend a winter in Cairo.

From now on his ruminations were fragmentary. Just as he was following some train of thought, a beautiful woman left the room, and he had perforce to watch her navigate through the linen-covered islands.

Absently he reached into the inner pocket of his coat for a bit of paper to draw on—the arch of some culvert, maybe, or that half-moon which would take in one of the richest jade-quarries in China—and discovered an old letter from New York. As he unfolded it to turn it face downward, a name caught

his eye. Always this name stirred his curiosity, though never to a point of actual investigation. Richard Cameron had been dead eleven years, and still his name and official standing headed all official paper. No doubt Ainslee's influence and domination accounted for this bit of sentimentality, for Wardlaw could assign it to nothing else. Odd, but he had never seen Cameron, who had died in Mexico.

Cameron the force and Ainslee the diplomat, the negotiator; Cameron the thunderbolt and Ainslee the interviewer of emperors and kings and potentates; and perhaps the threatening disaster was due to the fact that the old boy had broken his health in a vain endeavor to play both games after the death of his partner. And quietly Clarke, who was force, a dynamo turned by avarice instead of ideals, had slipped into Cameron's shoes.

Suddenly Wardlaw sat up stiffly in his chair, forgot the past, the future and the unknown dangers which threatened it. There was, at this precise moment, no room in his thoughts for anything but the amazing present.

She!



CHAPTER IV

VALIANTLY he had tried to smother the thought of her, and Ainslee's revelations had succeeded to a certain extent in the accomplishment of this desire. And yonder she came, winding in and out among the tables, alone, toward him! His heart began to beat thunderously, and his ears filled with the sound of it. Evidently the vacant table at the right was her objective.

She was dressed in black, a dull black, which gave to her beautiful face, arms and shoulders the brilliant luminous whiteness of summer clouds. Her hair, thick black coils, seemed to throw off faint prismatic colors as she passed under lights.

Wardlaw drew in a long breath, slowly. He had discovered that by so doing he could control his heart-beats, more or less, after the first idiotic jump.

She sat down calmly and surveyed the other diners.

In reaching for a match that he did not need, Wardlaw knocked over his glass of water. A waiter had to rush frantically forward, of course, whip off the drenched cloth, supply a fresh one and attract the attention of everybody. Wardlaw did not have the cour-

age to act upon his immediate desire, to rise and leave forthwith. These awkward blunders always had the faculty of temporarily paralyzing him. Yet not even the waiter, a passable judge of human beings, suspected that he was gazing upon a mild order of mental débâcle. Beyond a sudden acceleration of color, fairly well hidden under his tan, Wardlaw's face was bland enough.

Within three feet of him the woman who had been filling his thoughts unduly for days! First at the theatre in New York, then on the *Cretic* the day before they landed at Naples, again on the jetty in Constantinople—now at his very elbow! Who was she? What was she? Whither bound? Because of his weakness, was he ever to know?

His shoulders drooped slightly. Here was the sort—outwardly, anyhow—of woman he had always dreamed about, woven his inarticulate romances around. There were no doubt men who knew her intimately. Lucky dogs! Or there might be one man who had his seat at the table of the gods. She!

Setting his jaws, he turned and looked at her boldly, even truculently—to find to his horror that she was looking squarely at him! But even before he could avert his gaze, he saw that in this look of hers there was apparently neither interest nor curiosity. She might have looked at a table-leg like that. Infernal, idiotic heart! He dropped his napkin and rose.

Blissfully unconscious that more than one roving feminine glance followed him, Ward-

law strode off toward the exit. The lady in black stared at his flat shoulders. This time there was interest in her eyes, which were as gray as the sea on misty summer mornings, deep as wells, and like wells, reflective. You saw the sky there, the sailing clouds, the stars, but you saw not what lay below. She smiled. Da Vinci, who knew more about women's smiles than all the other painters put together, would have seized upon it illuminatingly; but his brush would have discovered a touch of pity in her eyes despite the faintly ironic twist to her lips.

"The great Wardlaw," she murmured. "Well, we shall see."

Wardlaw went on into the lounging room, confused by a riot of conflicting emotions. He was happy, miserable, elated, depressed, puzzled. She! He lighted another cigar, but it went out half a dozen times, a fact which would have marked perturbation in any user of the weed.

The unknown, who had practically if unwittingly driven him out of the dining room, took her time. She seemed more interested in her paper-covered Tauchnitz than in the animated scene which draws so many to Shepherd's to dine. From time to time, however, her gray eyes roved over the top of her novel. Her fingers were ringless. She wore a single jewel, a polished emerald shoulder-buckle.

Never doubt it, the other women, many of them having noted her arrival at tea-time, were watching her, speculating upon her age

and her past. The men saw nothing but her extraordinary beauty. A beautiful young woman, however, dining alone in public, is sure to invite malice and suspicion. In Cairo she will be either of two things, a princess junketing incognita or an adventuress. Naturally the women wrote her down adventuress and warned their men folks. Cairo was too near that notorious Port Saïd.

In parenthesis: poor old Port Saïd, grossly maligned for thirty years—dead and dull as the Bitter Lakes west of it, boasting these days of a few dilapidated bars, hotels run down at the heel, and a barnlike moving picture theatre! But east of it—well, you shall see.

Late, Wardlaw saw the unknown enter and take the chair directly in front of the leader of the string orchestra. Believing himself unobserved, he watched her closely.

Immediately—for such is the irrepressible Latin—the orchestra leader began to play to her. He twisted, rolled his eyes, swayed his slender body, until Wardlaw wanted to rush over, seize the fiddle and break it over the fool's head. But even as this desire came to him, he saw the unknown—yawn! This disconcerted the violinist, who at once selected some one a trifle more receptive. Wardlaw chuckled. Evidently she was able to take care of herself.

A woman who could take care of herself! He had never cared for the clinging kind, not even in his high-flown romances. In his imagination he fell in love with a woman who

invariably rode, hunted, fished, dauntless under all conditions. Yonder beauty—pshaw, to-morrow she would pass out of his life forever. It was a habit they had, these charming creatures: they always departed just about the time he made up his mind to learn something about them.

Dark eyelashes are of inestimable value to the possessor. One can, as it were, see without being seen. A slight droop of the eyelid, and the eye becomes hidden, but little remains hidden from that eye. Having ceased to be amused at the antics of the violinist, the unknown lowered her lashes and peered through them. Her glance stopped when it reached Wardlaw's keen, intelligent face, with its salient jaws, its crisp brown military mustache turned up slightly at the ends. Something pleased her, for a smile, shadowy, like a cloud passing over a field of wheat, stirred her lips and was gone before Mr. Huroki was sure that it had existed at all. In passing, however, he noticed that the smile left behind an imprint of gravity and seriousness.

His second cigar finished, Wardlaw sighed and got up. He would have liked to watch her all the evening, but he recognized the folly of such a proceeding. He went outside into the moonshine. The world lay magically white under his gaze. He walked without any particular destination in view, and at length found himself leaning against the steel parapet of the great Nile bridge. The flowing river, varnished with blazing silver, shot underneath with a thousand pleasant little

sounds. At his left, moored along the embankment, were the reedlike masts of the feluccas, forming a swaying lattice across the brilliant disc of the moon. Egypt!

To know a woman like that, to have her at one's side down through the highway of the years! He laughed humanly. Had he ever seen a beautiful woman without wishing this very thing? On the other hand, it was logical that he should think strongly about this young woman who had crossed his path so peculiarly. He took out his pipe, but he did not fill it. He thrust it back into his pocket, jammed his hat securely on his head—and began to run. He vaulted sleeping beggars, circled snarling dogs, dodged pedestrians, broke through a camel-train, dashed up the Shepherd terrace and never lessened his gait until he was inside his room. He was a fine specimen of a man to handle big affairs! But nothing in his room had been disturbed.

It was half after eleven; he undressed and got into his pajamas, turned out the lights and sat down by one of the windows. He wasn't sleepy. He sat there, planning his future and building old dreams over again. He must have idled away more than an hour in this manner, silent and motionless, when suddenly he lowered his pipe and assumed a listening attitude. He had a pair of remarkably keen ears. What he heard was the rasp of a door-knob turning. Naturally he focused his gaze upon the door which opened out into the corridor or hall. And yet obliquely he saw a black space slowly widen in the wall at his

right—the door which gave into the adjoining room. He reached for his revolver.

"I wouldn't come any further," he said quietly.

But the black space went on widening.



CHAPTER V

IN THE very still period which followed his challenge, Wardlaw thought keenly and bitterly. Before sailing from Hong Kong, some invisible presence had warned him, but he had stubbornly declined to listen. Why? Never before had he ignored that secret impulse which had been his guidance so many times in the past. Why hadn't he let O'Holleran accompany him—that fighting blue-eyed red-head, who could think quicker in danger than any one he knew?

By and by the black space ceased to grow, and Wardlaw concluded that the door to the adjoining bedroom was wide open. He leaned forward, tense and expectant, his revolver ready. Having sat in the dark for more than an hour, he could distinguish one object from another more or less accurately. Strain his eyes as he might—using the oblique glance which is often better than the direct in the dark—he could see nothing beyond that black space. No gray patch appeared to suggest a human face. The door had simply opened to its full width—nothing more than that.

He was used to nerve racking moments, but not of this peculiar quality. He had often reckoned with ambushes in the old Mindanao days, but always he had known the character

of the danger. But to sit still and wait for something you knew nothing about, a danger which announced its presence in this ghostly manner!

Having strained his eyes without success, he switched to his ears, for it is a physiological fact that one cannot strain both at the same time. The room had that supreme breathless silence of a pyramid-top. Yet he was absolutely certain that some one else was in the room. For a decade or more he had lived in the open; and to all who are fond of Nature, she lends a sixth sense. Wardlaw could not have explained; he only knew that some one else was in the room. One man or two?

He happened to recollect that he was in half-silhouette against the window, a square of pale reflected moonshine. But before he could leverage himself to his feet, a pair of sinewy arms seized his elbows, and he was jerked violently back. Something wet and sickly smelling was clapped over his nose.

When Wardlaw's senses returned—as a swimmer comes up from a deep dive, dazed and breathless—he was sitting in his chair. The room was dark. But for the evil taste on his tongue and the enervation, it might have been an unpleasant dream. He flung off the lassitude, the craving to sit still and do nothing, and staggered to his feet. There was no black space in the wall now; the door had been closed. He crossed the room to the light-switch and turned the key. He blinked for a moment, then looked at the bed. Untouched. All his confidence in himself returned. They

had overlooked that kitbag; but the one he had placed on the centre-table was gone.

He went into the bathroom, filled the bowl and soused his head and face, vigorously towelling himself. He then put on his trousers and coat over his pajamas and went downstairs. It was after two o'clock, and it took ten minutes to rout out some one in authority.

"Who occupies the room next to mine?" he demanded.

"What is your number?"

Wardlaw gave it. "I've heard strange sounds there."

"That is hardly possible, sir. The room is empty, being held in reservation for the Princess Zenia."

"Empty?"

"Yes, sir. Perhaps you were dreaming a little."

Wardlaw thought for a moment. "That would be a good joke on me. I wonder, now!"

"Too much Turkish coffee, if you are not used to it, will do that, sir."

"Never thought of that. Sorry to trouble you."

Wardlaw returned to his room. On the centre-table stood the missing bag. He ran to it. Locked! He took out his keys and unlocked it. The contents had been man-handled, but everything was there, even the code-book.

"The infernal beggars!" he murmured. "Keys for the next room and keys for my bags! And how'd they guess I'd go downstairs?"

These questions were followed by a thought

which wrinkled his forehead. He began to understand. He was not dealing with ordinary intelligence. All this had been carefully planned. There was behind this adventure a brain which could anticipate his actions. If only he had had the sense to bring O'Holleran along!

Wardlaw went over to the window and sat down again. There was a real struggle in front, then? They hadn't been afraid to chloroform him. Rather ominous significance. To gain their ends, then, they would stop at nothing. It was something to his advantage that he could arrive thus quickly at this conclusion. He must always remain on board at night; no prowling about Aden, Colombo, Penang, or Singapore; he must give them no opportunity to disable him physically. The next best thing for his mysterious assailants, supposing eventually they did not get to that kitbag in the bed, would be his temporary or permanent elimination from the game.

"How old was Cupid?" "*Beware the little yellow men.*" From now on he would leave nothing to chance. He would base all his future actions upon his intimate knowledge of brown and yellow peoples. He would not play into their hands, as many a white man had, by considering his cunning superior to theirs. He sensibly knew that it was not. Only Japs could have crawled across his room without his hearing them. There was still a bit of puzzle. Why hadn't they entered the room during his absence? Perhaps it was

due to an inherent trait: having once planned a certain method of attack, your Japanese never turns until he has tried it.

Having taken this orientation of a novel situation, Wardlaw went to bed, confident that he would not be disturbed again that night. Nor was he.

The next morning he was none the worse for the midnight adventure. Physically he was normal; mentally he had never felt so keen in all his life. To get to Hong Kong in spite of all!

Deep down in his heart he knew that he was acting wrongly in one respect, but his stubbornness would not permit him to change his course. And some one, being aware of this characteristic, built accordingly.

"How old was Cupid?" The phrase kept running through his head. How the old boy must have chuckled over it! How he loved a good joke, a good story! Nobody like him. What a father he would have made for some man—John Wardlaw, for instance, who had really never known a father. Henry Ainslee! All right, if he failed the old boy, it would be because his ticket was going to take him a good deal farther than Hong Kong. All he wanted was a foot on the deck of the P. and O. liner.

At nine-thirty Wardlaw stepped into the train, found a seat in a smoking compartment, hoisted his kitbags to the rack and lighted his pipe.

Just as the train began to move, a Japanese came in and took the seat opposite Wardlaw. It happened to be the only one vacant. He

bobbed and smiled at everyone. There was an exaggerated quirk to his eyes that made one suspect that the owner saw the world only as a huge joke, never laughing out loud at it, but always on the verge. A little investigation, however, might have disclosed the fact that they were singularly humorless eyes.

Shortly after the three Englishmen who were the other occupants of the compartment—officers returning to their posts in India—and Wardlaw opened their newspapers. When he reached the fashion-news, Wardlaw lowered his sheet. The Jap was vainly endeavoring to roll a cigarette the American way, and his knees were peppered with golden flake.

Wardlaw smiled amiably. "Let me show you how to do that."

The Jap smiled gratefully and passed the paper and tobacco. Wardlaw laid a paper on his left palm, sprinkled some tobacco on it and with a few manipulations—so rapid that they were almost sleight-of-hand—rolled a perfect cigarette, which he extended.

"By Jove!" cried one of the Englishmen, who had been an interested spectator. "That's clever of you. With one hand! And I've tried the bally trick with two hands a thousand times and can't make it."

"*Trick* is the word," replied Wardlaw. "An old cowboy trooper of mine taught me how to do it."

"The American Army?"

"Resigned."

"Saw some of your chaps in China—lanky youngsters. Rather fooled you, you know;

didn't seem up to the mark until they got into the shindy. Not much on discipline, I take it."

"That depends. We try to educate our men into thinking fighters. We want every man an officer embryo."

"It can't be done," declared the Englishman.

"See!" interrupted the Jap triumphantly.

"Very well done," said Wardlaw.

Once more the newspapers crackled, but Wardlaw only pretended to read. All cut-and-ried, he thought. Had this fellow been in his room, or was he the director? Wardlaw knew that no one carried that American brand of tobacco without knowing how to roll an ordinary cigarette. The little yellow man knew all about it; his awkwardness had been assumed to attract attention. During the conversation with the English officer, Wardlaw had not neglected to watch the Jap obliquely. The clumsy efforts had continued for a space; then with a sly observant roll of his tight little eyes, the trick was done almost as well as Wardlaw himself could have done it. He wanted to strike up an acquaintance with John Wardlaw, who was in a most receptive mood, having anticipated something like this the moment he got onto the train. That there had been a vacant seat opposite was merely accident; sooner or later, between Cairo and Port Said, the little yellow man would have created a similar situation.

Rather clumsy, but Wardlaw knew that the things to follow would not be.

At noon the Englishmen went in to the dining car. Wardlaw, however, had long since decided to stick to the compartment for the four and a half hours to Port Saïd. Never again would he take his eyes off that kitbag until its contents were safely in the purser's keeping.

"You are returning to Japan?" he asked, ready to pick up the thread held out by the cigarette episode.

"Oh, yes. I was recently graduated from Yale."

"Suppose you'll be glad to see cherry-blossoms again and wisteria in the spring."

"Oh, yes. I have been away six years."

"I often wonder how many Yale students there are in Japan. You are all for education."

The other expanded. Astute and cunning, the race has not yet learned to cover the chinks in the armor of self-esteem. They are childishly eager for compliments.

"P. and O. boat?"

"Oh, yes. My father owns a nursery in Yokohama. Here is my card."

Wardlaw gravely offered his in return.

"You will excuse me," said Mr. Huroki. "After all, I think I shall go to the dining car. It will be my last opportunity of the kind. Will you not join me?"

"No, thanks. I am waiting until I get on board."

Mr. Huroki bobbed and took himself off. Wardlaw stared at the endless reaches of desert sand.

To Wardlaw's mind, Mr. Huroki was playing his game clumsily; and yet he knew that in the days close at hand he would have to look sharp. There was no bitterness in his heart toward Huroki. The Jap would naturally do for his cause what he, Wardlaw, was ready at all times to do for his. And from the Japanese point of view, Huroki had a better right in China than had John Wardlaw. It was going to be the old story of the survival of the fittest.

The rest of the journey was uneventful. When the train arrived in Port Saïd, Wardlaw lowered his kitbags and carried them as far as the gangplank, where he beckoned to a white-coated steward.

"Cabin Two-twenty-four, steward. I'll be close at your heels."

As the steward started up the gangplank, Wardlaw paused. It was not an indecisive pause; it was, rather, an abrupt halt.

There she was, almost within touch of his hand, her trim body in pongee, her black hair bundled carelessly under a Panama—lovely. He liked the set of her shoulders. He liked the way she stood up. Alone! It made patent her courage and resource. Had he fought shy of women all these years because he had been less afraid of them than of the possibility of becoming attached to one who possessed neither of these attributes? He hated wishy-washy women, who wanted to cling, lean, depend. Of course, a wife would mean something; but a comrade, now, like this young woman a stride in front of him!

He smiled, for the advice of the professor up at Simla came back. "Play the cave-man. Pick out one that hasn't any brother." His imagination caught fire. He would know her. He knew that the old failing would pounce upon him, that he would stammer, stumble and bump into things; but he also knew that this time he would stick it out.

The passengers behind Wardlaw began to grumble, and he was forced to continue up the gangplank. The unknown seemed to be in a hurry, for she firmly elbowed her way ahead of others, advising her steward occasionally. She reached the deck before Wardlaw and disappeared.

A jam took place in the main companion, and Wardlaw found himself in the very middle of it. Could he have done so, he would have backed out and gone to his cabin through the smoke room companion. This ship was an old friend, and he knew the lay of her decks tolerably well. Only two months gone he had crossed the Yellow Sea in her to Yokohama, to make connections with the Pacific Mail.

During this congestion in the main companion, he lost track of the steward who had his kitbags; and this set him fretting and fuming until a thoroughfare was established. He hurried to his cabin, to find the kitbags on the lounge under the port and the regular cabin steward puttering about.

"How do you do, sir?"

"With you again, George."

"Yes, sir. The Captain ordered me to tell

you to go up to the bridge. He wishes to see you."

Wardlaw closed the port, locked his door and went up to the bridge. Captain Murfree hailed him pleasantly.

"Saw your name on the list, Wardlaw. Come and dine with me in my cabin to-night. You'll sit at my table during the voyage?"

"I certainly shall not."

The sailor laughed. "Still shy of squawking females. Came back rather fast from America, didn't you?"

"Business."

"Then you didn't get that fishing-trip you were talking about?"

"No—worse luck. What are you looking at me like that for?"

"Am I looking at you like that?" countered the sailor humorously.

"Anything wrong with my tie, or have I got my hat on hindside before?"

"It might happen that I'm only glad to see you. Didn't they feed you well in Cairo?"

"Shame on me!" Wardlaw laughed in his turn. "I'm acting as though I had a grouch. My apologies. What time will you be having dinner?"

"Seven-thirty."

"I'll be there, if only for the sake of those fat cigars of yours."

Wardlaw climbed down the ladder and returned to his cabin. An old traveler, he opened one of his kitbags and proceeded to hang up his clothes in the locker and lay away his shirts and collars in the drawers.

The Oriental twilight was falling swiftly outside, and so he turned on the lights, selected another key from his ring and started to open the kitbag he had so carefully guarded. For some reason the key did not slip in with its usual smoothness. After a third trial, however, the lock opened, and Wardlaw stretched back the frame—and stared down, transfixed with bewilderment!



CHAPTER VI

WHAT Wardlaw saw would have transfixed any shy bachelor: a pair of long golden silk stockings, stretched across an unnamable something as white as snow and as filmy as fog. From a corner roguishly peeked the scarlet tip of a Moroccan slipper. From a little bouquet of dried green leaves there rose faintly an exquisite perfume—lemon-verbena. Not his kitbag, but a woman's! It was so unaccountable, so absurd a situation, that he stared on, hypnotized.

Subconsciously one thing made an indelible impression—the strange and rather sinister similarity between this kitbag and his own. Label for label, it was almost the exact counterpart of the kitbag which was at this moment the most precious thing in the world. And while his subconsciousness went on printing and storing away the amazing fact of the resemblance, his whole conscious thought was focused upon those silk stockings.

“Good Lord!”

Some subtle inner warning galvanized him into immediate action. He shut the frame swiftly, caught the handles and dashed out of the cabin into the companion. Two minutes later he burst into the purser's office.

"There's been a mistake somewhere. Some woman has got my kitbag, and I've got hers!" he announced breathlessly.

The purser laughed. "Your kitbag just turned up. The lady seemed quite as excited as you. The bags certainly look alike. Here you are, Mr. Wardlaw. Fault of one of the stewards, probably."

Overjoyed, Wardlaw swung his bag off the counter and without question marched off to his cabin. But the sweat was beginning to flow from the roots of his hair.

"I'm in luck, and no mistake!"

He lifted the bag to the lounge and opened it. He flung the contents about haphazardly until the bag was cleared. The bottom looked innocent enough. At each corner was a brass-headed nail. He pressed the two at one end and raised the leather, revealing a secret bottom. Reposing snugly in this bottom was a black leather portfolio. Japan would have given a million out of hand for the secret it held. The sigh Wardlaw released came from the bottom of his heart. A narrow squeak. He drew his free hand across his forehead. He would put an end to all this fuss and worry by placing the portfolio in the purser's safe at once.

The Japs were after him—not the least doubt of that. But how much they knew was another matter. Certainly Carrington would have tipped his hint anonymously. Otherwise a bit of backfire would mark his commercial downfall. If it should be learned that he had given away a secret like this,

merely to make the merger possible, the Street would never trust him again. "Watch your kitbags," Ainslee had warned without the least idea of what they contained. That was like the old boy, who was sometimes known as Old Details. Wardlaw deduced that Carington had mentioned his kitbags to the Japanese Consulate in Naples. Nothing more would be necessary. Since the Hu-peh canal deal, the Japanese secret service had taken peculiar interest in the doings of John Wardlaw, civil engineer.

For several years he had carried these kitbags, and both had secret bottoms. The idea had come to him originally because of the pestiferous curiosity of the natives. World over, they had to pry into things, not with any idea of stealing, but because of that inherent curiosity to see "the white man's things." First, he had stowed away his correspondence and money in these compartments. Then hazardous journeys came, when it was of the utmost importance to keep his affairs from the knowledge of rival concerns.

Only one other person knew of the existence of these secret bottoms—Henry Ainslee. It had occurred to Wardlaw that he might some day be laid away by accident, and some one in authority must know where he kept his valuable papers. Naturally he took Ainslee into his confidence.

He dressed for dinner, whistling snatches from half-forgotten light operas. Occasionally, though, his hands would pause and his eyes become fixed. Lemon-verbena! Strange,

but of all perfumes that was his favorite—that and lavender—sweet, natural perfumes which never insisted upon being recognized, which when detected seemed instantly to vanish in sheer modesty.

At length he finished dressing, picked up the portfolio, balanced it thoughtfully on his hand, made as though to open it, reconsidered, snuggled it under his arm and once more sought the purser.

"I wish to deposit this with you, if you please." The purser accepted the portfolio and extended his signature-book, which Wardlaw signed. "I am going to ask you for a receipt."

"Not necessary, Mr. Wardlaw."

"I prefer it—in case I might not be able to sign your book."

"Oh, I see. Might miss the boat somewhere along the route."

"You never can tell," said Wardlaw.

"Good evening."

"Ah! Good evening, Mr Huroki," returned Wardlaw genially. He looked down into the burning black eyes of the Jap. "How is *Dai Nippon*?"

"The pearl of Japan—*Hondo*! Is not my country beautiful?" Huroki thrust forward a small bag of gold and a letter of credit. "In a few months—cherry-blossoms! I shall never forget my first sight of ripe cherries in your country." He signed the book. "Do you play auction?"

"Whenever I get the chance," said Wardlaw. He now could play any game that came

along. The O. C. C. would go along, no matter what befell him.

"Suppose we start a game to-night?" was Huroki's suggestion.

"That depends upon how long the Captain keeps me in his cabin," answered Wardlaw, stuffing the receipt into the unused watch-pocket in the top of his trousers. I am dining with him to-night."

"I shall be in the smoke room all the evening."

"Now, I wonder!" mused the purser as Huroki stepped outside.

"About what?" asked Wardlaw, happy and light of heart.

"Why that Jap has been hanging around here for more than an hour. The moment you came in, he followed."

"Met him on the train, and he's looking to me for a game of bridge. All educated Japs have gone mad over auction. It's putting *Go* on the shelf. Thanks." Wardlaw swung out of the office.

The purser stooped before his safe and carefully studied the portfolio intrusted to his care. He turned it over and over.

"Bally odd, if you should ask me. But it's none of my business. What's his idea of a receipt? Not necessary."

Wardlaw presented himself at the Captain's door at seven-thirty, and was cheerily bidden to enter.

"How's your appetite?"

"It's particularly keen. In fact, I'm starved."

"Soup, Rao!" cried the Captain to his handsome Cingalese servant.

Wardlaw thoroughly enjoyed that dinner; it was just the kind of an affair he needed after all this tension. Nevertheless his effervescence fell steadily. By the time the Captain had passed his marvelous cigars, Wardlaw's gayety consisted mainly of vocal affirmatives and short nods. The sailor dug into his short gray beard thoughtfully.

"What's on your mind?"

"Lots."

"You started out fine; but the barometer's acting queerly. What kind of lots?"

"Battle, murder, and sudden death," answered Wardlaw; but he said it lightly. "I've been thinking."

"Better be careful. If you think in this part of the world, you're likely never to get the kink out," the Captain bantered.

Wardlaw took out a sealed envelope which he studied for a moment; then passed it over to the sailor. "A favor. I want you to put this in your private safe. There's a receipt inside for something I've left with the purser. Now, if anything should happen to me while I'm aboard your old hooker—if I shouldn't turn up for breakfast some fine morning—you will send a wireless to this name and address. When the boat reaches Hong Kong, you will give the addressee this envelope and explain to the purser."

"Happen to you? What the deuce do you mean?"

"Sorry, but I can't explain."

"Are you spoofing me?"

"I am very serious. I'm in danger, but I haven't the least idea what this danger is or from which way it will come. It may not materialize at all; but I must guard against the possibility."

"On my ship?"

"On any ship I sail on. I can't tell you any more."

"Somebody after the original package?"

"Something like that. The only way you can help me is to put this envelope in your safe and remember my instructions regarding it."

"No sooner said than done. Queer old world, these parts. All right. If you won't tell me, you won't."

"Where do you get these cigars?" asked Wardlaw irrelevantly.

"Gibraltar. Little two-by-four shop the tourist hasn't discovered yet. I'll follow out your instructions. And if at any time you need help, come to me. Take a fistfull of those cigars and come along up to the bridge with me."

"I'm restless. I'll trot around the decks. Thanks for a bully good dinner."

As Wardlaw stepped over the threshold, the Captain beckoned to his Cingalese servant.

"Rao, that gentleman is Wardlaw Sahib. You remember him. When you are off duty I want you to watch him—take note of all who approach him. Watch out for people who seem to be watching him. Wardlaw Sahib is my friend."

"Yessir!"

"And report to me every night."

"Yessir!"

"He's just gone out to starboard. You might take a peek at his back. I'll have a steward sent in to clean up."

The barefooted Cingalese went out at once, and from afar watched Wardlaw, who was leaning against the rail smoking. Perhaps half an hour passed without either Wardlaw or the Cingalese moving. Promenaders passed and repassed, but none of them stopped. At length a woman dropped out and stood by the rail perhaps half a dozen feet from Wardlaw. The Cingalese watched her closely, but she never turned her head; she simply stared at the opal mists of the desert. Even after Wardlaw tossed away the end of his cigar and left the rail, the Cingalese remained at his post of observation, no doubt held there by the subtle attraction of the pearly half-moon of the woman's shoulders. When she finally moved on, the Cingalese padded back to the Captain's cabin.

Entering the smoke room, his soul filled with an odd temptation—the desire to play with danger, to court it, now that nothing could stop the big wheels from turning to their prescribed ends—Wardlaw accepted Huroki's invitation to play a few rubbers of auction. Where were Huroki's comrades? Steerage-passengers, doubtless; and doubtless he had nothing to fear physically from Huroki and everything to fear from the men in the steerage.

Sometimes, when he took the "dummy," Wardlaw's thoughts broke away from the game. He knew he was going to meet her. But how? Would he turn tail the last moment? The fact that he had vowed to meet her gave to the venture a kind of sportsmanship; and because he was a thorough sportsman, he was determined to play his bid. Will-power, the professor had said. Had he ever really used it against his imbecile bashfulness? Only once that he could remember, and the memory wasn't a pleasant one.

"Your deal, Mr. Wardlaw."

"Beg pardon!"

Never before had any woman attracted him like this one. He had seen women quite as beautiful, quite as alluring, but the magnet had never been powerful enough to perform a greater miracle than to excite his imagination and wistfulness.

By the time he had lost three rubbers and became aware of Huroki's chagrin, Wardlaw awoke to the fact that he was playing auction in the most mechanical manner. He pushed the cards to the centre of the table.

"No more for me, gentlemen. I'm spoiling a good game. Not up to the mark."

He was rising from his chair, when an odd expression on Huroki's face caught his attention. The Japanese was staring at the opened port behind Wardlaw, who turned instinctively. For a space not more than the intake of a breath, he gazed into two calm, incurious gray eyes. Most women would have been startled by the suddenness of his turn.

Unagitated—at least outwardly—this one turned away. In another woman Wardlaw would have described this superior calmness as boldness. Not a flutter of an eyelid; a glance, and she was gone, without the slightest indication of precipitancy.

Huroki laughed. "The lady has been watching us for ten minutes."

"And I frightened her away!" said Wardlaw, smiling.

He went outside tingling. But the desire to give chase was short-lived. Still afraid of them, wasn't he!

The trip down the Red Sea to Aden was uneventful, save for a minor incident. At night he left the cabin door open the length of the hook-latch to catch what currents of air there were in the companions. One night, as he lay in his bunk dreaming with his eyes open, he heard the latch rattle, then fall with a little smack against the door. Instantly he flooded the cabin with light, swung out of the bunk and dashed into the companion. He had a fleeting glimpse of a Lascar. At least the prowler wore a brown rag of a turban. Still, the trespasser was rather too squat and chunky to pass as a Lascar, proverbially thin. A Jap? And after that receipt?

Her name was Allison. He had found that out from the dining room chart. And she sat at the Captain's table, at his right; and the old sea-dog rarely failed to occupy his chair at dinner. From his seat at the Doctor's table Wardlaw watched her. He could do so without turning his head. The Captain—

who, as Wardlaw knew, was rather hard to please—evidently found her to his liking. From soup to dessert there was always a broad grin on his weather-roughened face. Often now before dinner Wardlaw would observe the two promenading arm in arm. So he maneuvered skillfully to pass them, the original idea being to watch for a sign from the sailor. But there was never anything more than a cheery salute.

Wardlaw arraigned himself bitterly. There was nothing in the world to prevent him from boldly asking the Captain to present him—nothing but the lack of boldness. He knew that there was no aloofness on the Captain's part. Times without number he had given the Captain the same impression he had given the world at large—that he did not care for the companionship of women.

On the afternoon of the second day out from Aden—about three, when passengers are snoozing, when every one is off duty but the steersman and the Chinese stokers, when stewards and stewardesses are generally playing hooky—Wardlaw left the stuffy smoke room and went down to his cabin to replenish his pouch, which was empty.

He grasped the handle of the door, turned and pushed. The door did not open. He thought that singular. He had certainly left the door unlocked when he had gone up to lunch. The little companion was dim. He bent toward the keyhole to find the key resting in the lock. Absentmindedness—he had evidently locked the door without being con-

scious of the act. A mighty good thing for him that he had taken the portfolio to the purser. He turned the key and pushed the door inward.

In the middle of the cabin, her hands clutching a magnificent peacock kimono about her throat, her hair disheveled and her gray eyes as wide as they possibly could be—stood Miss Allison!



CHAPTER VII

WARDLAW'S surprise is not to be described by any word-picture. It was so tremendous that it went beyond the bounds of ordinary definition. Locked in his cabin! In the most gorgeous kimono he had even seen, her very dishevelment accentuating her loveliness! He was conscious of that, anyhow. But he was not conscious of the fact that when a woman is beautiful in dishevelment, the last word has been said in testimony.

How long the tableau lasted neither was ever able to determine. A worldly-wise man—or rather a man versed in the ways of women—would have been first to break it. The advantage was all on Wardlaw's side. Vaguely this thought percolated through his bewilderment, but he could not find any verbal handle to it. Locked in his cabin! His mental processes began and ended with that.

Shrewdly reasoning out his mental condition, the young woman recovered first.

"I began to believe I should never get out," she said. "Where are the stewards? I rang and rang. I have been here fully an hour."

"An hour?" he repeated stupidly.

"It is horribly embarrassing," she went on, a little more rapidly, her fingers tightening in the soft folds of the kimono. "It was all done so suddenly that I forgot to call out."

Wardlaw stared on.

"You are Captain Wardlaw. I am Miss Allison. My cabin is opposite. I was reading. My door was open to catch what air there was, when I saw a man slink into this cabin. I instantly concluded that a Lascar had no business here; so I got up and ran across. He was going through your things. Evidently he did not hear my approach. When I seized him by the arm, he swung violently about, flung me against the bunk, transferred the key, and the thing was done before I could recover my balance. But he wasn't a Lascar; he was a Japanese."

"A Japanese?"

A little red slipper began to pat the floor impatiently. "I can easily imagine your astonishment. I hope you will do me the honor to imagine mine." The smile, however, was rather propitiating.

"Good heavens!"—and with this homely ejaculation, Wardlaw broke through his trance. "A thousand pardons for my stupidity!"

"Granted. I was never more glad to see any one. I couldn't call from the port. I just had to wait; and it wasn't an enjoyable ordeal. I believe your bell-wires have been cut. I rang long enough."

Wardlaw stepped inside, climbed into the upper bunk and inspected the molding which covered the wires.

"They are cut. Now, I wonder when they did that? The bell was all right early this morning. Lucky I needed some tobacco, Miss

Allison, or you'd have had to stay here until I came down to dress for dinner. It was mighty good of you to take all this trouble. It would have been simpler had you rung your own bell."

"I thought of that—when it was too late. I don't believe he took anything."

"It wouldn't matter if he had."

He stood aside, and as she passed, she gave him a friendly nod. As the door of her cabin closed, he stared at it thoughtfully, then closed his own—and executed a light fantastic which, due to a sudden beam roll, toppled him against the wash-bowl.

Of all the bizarre introductions! And nothing could have happened more to his advantage. He had met her, talked with her, and shared an adventure which was intimately their own. All the foreground—and it was in crossing this foreground that Wardlaw encountered his main difficulty in regard to women—which must be covered from introduction to genuine acquaintance, done away with in such an unforgettable manner!

Why, so far as he was concerned, heaven bless the meddling Jap!

Clever of Huroki to entice him into the smoke room each afternoon and evening so that his subordinates might have plenty of time to search the cabin. After that receipt, and they would keep after it so long as they believed it to be in his possession. And he couldn't very well declare his hand by dropping the hint that the receipt was in the Captain's private safe.

He was reasonably certain that Huroki was working blindly on the supposition that something of immeasurable value to the Japanese Government was in John Wardlaw's possession. Otherwise Huroki would not have bothered him; he would have sent his information to Tokio, and a callous thumb would have reached out and pressed down upon Peking so hard that it would be difficult for an American to purchase a chow dog.

Another thought rather chilled Wardlaw. He knew from experience that the Jap was prone to speculate dispassionately upon the future. Eventually unable to find anything in John Wardlaw's cabin or on his person, they might speculate on the supposition that it would be better for Japan's commercial future if a certain civil engineer disappeared permanently from the haunts of men. Next to finding out the truth, a delay would best serve.

So! He just had to get to Hong Kong. No shore-leave, and his chin toward his shoulder from now on.

How supremely beautiful she was! No hysterics, no outward sign of fright, the glance from her great gray eyes unshaken by a situation which would have appalled an ordinary woman. Agitated, yes, but not through fear. And now he could approach her as easily as though he had known her all his life. It was wonderful.

It seemed to him that he had finally emerged, that the old-time barriers had been blown away. When he went into dinner,

later, he smiled warmly at his table-mates. The sense of buoyancy was so strangely new that he bubbled.

Doctor Phillipson eyed him interestedly. He had never seen Wardlaw effervesce before, and tried to reason out the cause. He had known Wardlaw for several years, and many a rubber they had played together at the club in Hong Kong. A quiet man, with a dry humor and an even temper nothing seemed able to ruffle; and this effervescence sat oddly upon him. Once he followed Wardlaw's wandering gaze, and discovered a lovely profile. But this glance had to be repeated many times before the Doctor permitted himself to hazard a guess. What, Wardlaw? That would be fine business. The old woman-hater! Had he put his finger into the web at last?

Toward the end of the dinner a steward leaned over Wardlaw's shoulder and whispered that the Captain would be pleased to see him in the cabin for coffee.

Wardlaw accepted the invitation readily. He wanted to ask the Captain a thousand questions, questions until now he had not had the courage to voice. But he did not have the opportunity to ask them that night. One does not ask questions relative to the third person when the third person is present.

"Miss Allison has consented to join us, Mr. Wardlaw." That was the Captain's way of introducing them.

"We have met before," said Miss Allison gravely. But there was a flash of whimsical

humor in her eyes that put Wardlaw unbelievably at his ease. It thrilled him, too. For what did that flash convey but the unspoken words: "We have a little secret, you and I, but we sha'n't share it with anybody?"

At nine, having drunk the Captain's coffee and inspected his collection of chrysoprase, Wardlaw and Miss Allison went down to the promenade deck.

"Shall we walk a bit?" she suggested.

"Yes, let's walk!"—with boyish eagerness.

He had been wondering, once they reached the deck, what he should do, how he should act, and this suggestion solved the difficulty. It even put a halt to the return of the old shyness. Things had gone smoothly enough, with the old sailor to bolster up the lapses, but how to act when alone with her was another matter. And yet, above all things, he wanted to be alone with her. He did not inquire into the reason as the hour was still to come wherein all these unusual new stirrings would merge into one stupendous fact.

"Suppose we go up to the bow and watch the phosphorescence break against the cut-water? It is wonderful sometimes when we run into a school of flying-fish. They look like fish of fire. Of course you have seen it many times."

"And never tire of it. But you seem to be an old traveler."

"I've gone about some. I love the sea. I like to look off. Cities bother me; I can't breathe deeply, surrounded by brick."

They did not speak again until they stood looking down the cutwater. Waves of fire rolled on each side. Presently they entered a school of flying-fish—for they also fly at night—and the fireworks began. The young woman uttered little cries of pleasure, and often flung downward a bare arm to direct his gaze toward beautiful curls of living water.

He fell to wondering how it possibly could be. Here he was, for the first time in his life, in a situation which formerly would have tied his tongue and shaken his knees, feeling and acting like a normal human being. So many years wasted, so many simple pleasures like this lost because of his abysmal idiocy.

As though there were two Wardlaws, he heard the other recounting an experience on an atoll in the lagoon of which flying-fish spawned. Night after night the whole lagoon had sparkled with blue fire, and always at a certain hour appeared the sinister fin of a marauding shark.

"And so you are Captain Wardlaw!" she said suddenly. "I have been hearing about you."

"Captain tell you I was a grouch?"

"Indeed, no! He said you would be perfect but for one thing."

"And what was that?"

"I haven't been able to get him to reveal that." She laughed joyously. "And you're the man who built the Kotun Bridge!"

Subtle flattery! He wouldn't have been human if he had not expanded under it.

"You have really seen it, then?"

"I have. It was a wonderful bit of engineering."

"It was great sport, anyhow. I like to tackle jobs like that."

"Liking makes a great many things possible. Look! there's a porpoise!"

When the fire died away, he spoke. "How small this world is! I first saw you in a theatre in New York."

"You did?"

"When I saw you on the *Cretic*, I was rather startled. When you came into the dining room at Shephard's the other night, I was dumfounded. When I saw you walking up the gangplank at Port Saïd—well, I haven't got any more adjectives."

"It must have looked odd. Coincidences have a way of mystifying us. Well, we did not have to wait for any one to introduce us."

"I must have acted like a yokel."

"On the contrary, you were very nice about it. I never saw any one quite so surprised as you were."

"I'm mighty glad it happened. Another man would have known you long ago."

"I doubt that. Perhaps I did not want to meet any one—until now. You never saw me speak to any one on the *Cretic*, did you?"

"I can't recollect that I did."

"I'm a moody individual. My own thoughts, sometimes, are very good company. I am used to silences."

"So am I; but I cannot say that I am fond of them."

She held out her wrist-watch toward the

moon. "Eleven o'clock! The time has passed very quickly." She turned away from the cutwater.

So—reluctantly on his part—they returned to the promenade deck. The turbaned figure behind the windlass stood up and stifled a yawn.

Wardlaw turned in, his whole view of life radically changed. He wasn't going to be afraid of them any more. What wonderful creatures they were, close up! And there was an added charm of mystery about her. Whither was she bound, and upon what errand?

Across the way the subject of these cogitations did not go to bed at once. She knelt on the lounge and stared out of the port for a long time. The expression on her face was dreamy, but not to a translatable degree. By and by she sighed, slid off the lounge and stood before the mirror. Her gray eyes gazed back at her somberly.

"Cheat!" she whispered.

She undressed and put on her kimono and sat on the edge of the bunk. She flung loose her hair, and the glossy black coils spread and rippled to her knees. Slowly she began to brush it—and she smiled. A child, seeing that smile, would have run to her with open arms.

It was one o'clock when she turned out the lights.

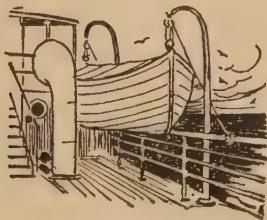
Mr. Huroki went to bed about the same time. His blank face was quite as blank as usual; but the occasional gesture, the flash

from his tightly bound eyes, would have warned another of his race that Mr. Huroki was in a towering rage about something.

On the following night, at eleven-thirty, Wardlaw stepped out of the smoke room and began his usual mile walk around the decks. His stride was springy, for his heart was light. A wonderful day! They had had luncheon abaft the smoke room, tea with the Captain, and had gone up to the bow after dinner. She was glorious. He was no longer diffident. The change which had taken place in him, all within forty hours, was really amazing. She made it so easy for him that it seemed as if he had known her all his life.

The deck was white with moonshine, and as he came down to port side, the ventilators and funnels threw dead black shadows across the silvered teak, shortening and lengthening to the gentle roll.

He was in the act of passing a cluster of ventilators when two shadowy forms sprang out from behind them. His lively backward movement was anticipated by a sinewy foot. A second later he lay helpless on his back.



CHAPTER VIII

INSTANTLY Wardlaw relaxed. The peculiar strain on his arms, which were being held extended beyond his head, and the numbness below his knees, convinced him that he had been thrown by a trick of ju-jitsu and that if he struggled, a broken arm might be the result. Besides, he had nothing in his pockets worth a struggle.

He lay in a black shadow, and he could see but little—the few stars low in the west, and the dim outline of the man who held his legs by kneeling on them. Of the man who held his arms he could see nothing.

Swiftly and systematically a hand went through his pockets, all of them. Then he was released, suddenly. By the time he got to his feet, the deck was empty. They had left his money and watch, but every scrap of paper was gone, even the letter he had started to scribble on that night in the Shepherd dining room.

He appreciated the utter uselessness of reporting the affair and going down into the steerage. Well as he knew them, all Japs looked alike in the dark. He would never be able to identify either of his assailants. And not finding what they sought—the receipt for the portfolio—they would immediately destroy what they had stolen.

He proceeded to the nearest companion and limped down to his cabin, chagrined. They had caught him napping. Hereafter he would take his constitutional when others were about. He owed it to Ainslee not to grow careless. The hard part of it would be that he wouldn't dare leave the old hooker until he reached Hong Kong; and a night in Colombo was worth a thousand in Bagdad, these days.

And what a surprise he would have for the old Boy when the proper time came!

As he lay in his bunk, another thought came to him. Supposing Carrington took it into his head to play up with the Japs? He had said "Five years," and Carrington would know what that meant. Supposing then, that Carrington was aiming to put his own hands upon the contents of that portfolio, later, under the General Construction Company's flag, to play it fifty-fifty with some Japanese firm? Carrington had, by tipping the Japs, proved that he was equal to such a game. The Open Door meant little or nothing to the O. C. C. supply man. Money—that was the keystone of his existence. So John Wardlaw must get to Hong Kong.

Why hadn't he brought O'Holleran along? The boy was a born *Lecocq*; and he had the Irishman's love for mystery and intrigue, which John Wardlaw had not.

"I can build with the best of them; but I'm a mollycoddle at this game. And I just as good as told Carrington what we chaps had done!"

He turned the pillow over, found a cool spot on it and fell asleep.

It soon became evident to everybody on board that Miss Allison was going out of her way to be pleasant to Wardlaw, and he was the last to realize that.

When a pretty woman sets out to engage a man, she generally succeeds. When she is beautiful and skillful, her success is unmodified; it is absolute. The latent and inexpressible gallantry in him awoke, and began to press outward, groping. He was a most willing victim—and if the glances of the British officers meant anything, an envied one.

Shuffle-board, rummy, Canfield, books, tea, walks; sometimes she read aloud to him; sometimes it was the first dog-watch up in the bow, when the porpoises were at play. With a man's usual vanity he became elated with the idea that he was conquering himself. He began to confide in her, told her about those lonely years and the cause. But he never spoke of his work unless she laid traps for him; and even then, half the time he sensed the traps and shied away.

The day before they landed at Colombo, he was profoundly stirred by an incident which outwardly seemed trivial enough. He had, with his usual guilelessness, long since decided that because she wore no gold band she was unattached. How was he to know that in these benighted times women lay aside their wedding-rings in order not to fall prey to an old-time superstition?

They were sitting in their steamer-chairs in

a corner of the boat-deck when one of the deck stewards approached her with a wireless.

"Will you excuse me?" she said to Wardlaw.

"Certainly." He rose and went over to the rail. Scarcely two minutes passed before she hailed him to return.

"Will you be so good as to throw these scraps overboard?"

He cupped his hands and she poured the minute scraps into the cup. He could not avoid noting the strange fire in her eyes, and he was sure that her hands trembled a little. Once more he went to the rail and flung the bits to the purpose of the wind. The flakes swooped, rose and soared; particles fluttered back to the ship and played a game of hide and seek among the ventilators. He returned to his chair.

He presently discovered that he could talk on one subject and think strongly on another. What he talked about were atolls; what he thought about were wireless messages. Was there some one back in the far country who had the right to send her wireless messages? Was this the first message or one of many? Never having been jealous, he was not familiar with the symptoms. He could not shut out the fire in her eyes; and by and by he began to find verbal navigation rather difficult.

"Don't you like to talk of your work?" she asked suddenly.

"Why—sometimes."

"But you're afraid that a butterfly such as

I am would not understand? Perhaps not all the technicalities. But a woman likes to hear a man tell of his own adventures, when they have been worth while, like yours."

"Adventures? All that was cut-and-dried stuff. You're trying to make it romantic."

"Work and romance are inseparable, though only poets comprehend that."

"That's like all poetry; musical but impractical. By the way, had you ever met that Jap Huroki before? I saw you chatting with him to-day."

"A chance acquaintance. I call him the Cork," she replied, laughing. "He bobs and bobs. But he has a wonderful knowledge of trees and flowers, and that always interests me."

"I know a sunflower from a hollyhock—that is, I used to; and that's about all."

"But you built the Kotun Bridge, the Andaman Breakwater, and the Hu-peh canals; and that's worth many gardens of flowers. Monuments! I'd rather build monuments than rose-gardens; only I'm a woman, and women's monuments are their children."

"You're not a suffragette, then?"

"I'm too busy."

"With what?" he asked thoughtlessly.

"That's my secret. We women generally carry one or more." And she eyed him obliquely. "I suppose you're going forward on another adventure."

"Work," he corrected. "I'm afraid the Captain's been filling your ears with a lot of nonsense."

"No. That's for younger men," she replied with an enigmatical smile. "There goes the first call for dinner. Till then!" She picked up her books.

After she was gone, he remained in her chair for several minutes. Finally he rose, sighing. Some one back home had the right to send her wireless messages!

As he passed the ventilators, he espied two bits of paper. He paused and stared down at them somberly. Ordinarily he would have gone on, but something impelled him to pick up those scraps which he recognized as belonging to the wireless she had received. He smothered his conscience, for it went against the grain to act like this. But the impellant was too strong; it was irresistible. On the first scrap he read the word *Car*, on the second, *China*. And the weight of a thousand years slipped from his shoulders. No lover would talk about China. He stuffed the bits of paper into his vest pocket—because they had once been touched by her.

They dropped anchor in the lovely harbor of Colombo at three the following afternoon. Many of the tourists were going to spend the night ashore, and the agents from the hotels had their hands full the moment they came up the ladder.

"I've got a room at the Galle Face," said Miss Allison exuberantly.

"I'm not going ashore," Wardlaw replied.

"Come in for the evening, anyway. Let's have dinner together, dance a little, and then you can return."

"But I can't dance."

"It's fun just watching."

"Sorry, but I've decided this voyage not to go ashore."

"Not even for dinner with me?"

"Ordinarily I'd go to the North Pole to dine with you."

"That wouldn't be half so pleasant as the Galle Face. Please!"

"No."

"Why?" she demanded.

"Because it is barely possible that if I went ashore I might never come back."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Away up back of Perak in Malacca there is a strange religious cult. The layman never sees these priests at worship. Just before they gather at the temple, they beat drums to warn away the layman. And woe to the trespasser! Perhaps I hear them."

"What a curious idea! You don't strike me as being superstitious. Come along and have dinner with me; and I'll promise to watch over you."

"How I'd like to go! No."

"Are you really in some kind of danger?" There was genuine anxiety in her tones.

"On my word, I don't know. That is all I can tell you. Go and have a good time, and tell me all about it to-morrow."

"This is the first time I've ever been refused like this. It's rather a novelty to find a man who can say No—and stick. I don't usually ask men to dine with me."

"I will give all I possess to be without responsibility at this moment."

"A mystery! You are embarked upon an adventure, then? That lightens my sense of chagrin. I shall write down in my diary: 'Captain Wardlaw refused to go ashore with me. A mysterious responsibility kept him on board ship.' Don't think you have offended me. You haven't. It takes a proper man to say no—to me. Good-by!"

As the tender drew away, she waved her hand cheerily. The women behind her, observing the act, shrugged and eyed each other significantly. A ship on a long voyage is quite as bad as the veranda of a summer hotel.

Miss Allison engaged a rickshaw and rode about town until six, then went out on the lovely red road to the Galle Face Hotel, where she dined alone. She was perfectly well aware of her status in the minds of the other women, but this only quickened her sense of humor.

At nine-thirty she returned to town, walked out to the end of the jetty and engaged a native boatman to row her back to the ship.

Meanwhile the Captain's Cingalese servant made a report that night.

"Wardlaw Sahib is always with the Mem-sahib."

"H'm!" mused the sailor. "Then he may be in danger after all."

"The man Huroki watches him often. He has dealings with two of his people in the steerage. He was angry the other night with one of them. Wardlaw Sahib's cabin stew-

ard says he has detected a Japanese prowling about the companion. Wardlaw Sahib did not go ashore to-night. But Huroki did."

"Where is the Memsahib?"

"She went ashore at five. That is all I have to report."

"Not enough to worry the galley cat."

At eleven o'clock Wardlaw leaned with his arms on the starboard rail of the boat-dick—in the little projection between two boats—and viewed the twinkling lights of Colombo. Each time the revolving light flashed eastward he saw a carved temple-top stand out vividly for an instant. Shadows passed to and fro across the gray water, where the reflections of ship lights danced on ripples stirred by the northeast trade.

Why, in the name of the seven wonders, hadn't he gone ashore with her? Would she be offended? Sheer stupidity; but that was John Wardlaw. He would have been far safer with her in a crowd than here, alone.

"Take care!" cried a woman's voice.

The next instant it seemed to Wardlaw that the bottom of the world had fallen out and he was going down—down—down!



CHAPTER IX

WHEN the sensation of going down ceased, that of ascension immediately began. Wardlaw felt himself carried through a blackness so dense that he had to fight for his breath. Then—pop!—he was back into the real world again. He opened his eyes to observe that the ceiling of his cabin was splashed with racing gold—reflected sunlight from the water. What had seemed to him minutes had in reality been hours. He heard voices, but he could not see the speakers, because something was wrong with his bunk!

“A mighty narrow squeak.” Wardlaw recognized this voice; it was the Doctor’s. “Did he carry any money?”

“I don’t believe so.” This voice belonged to the Captain. “My ship, too! He said he was in danger, but he said he couldn’t tell where it was coming from. Some engineering deal which the Japs are interested in blocking. I can’t put the whole steerage in irons. It was never one of my Lascars.”

“What’s the row?” asked Wardlaw feebly.

“He’s come around! No talking, matey!” said the Doctor, bending over.

“What’s happened?”

“Well, somebody took a sudden dislike to you last night, and gave you a love tap that

would have sent you to Davy—but for one thing.”

“One thing. What was that?”

“It’ll keep. You stay in your bunk until to-morrow, just to be on the safe side. There’s a whale of a lump on the port side of your coco, and you couldn’t put a hat on if you wanted to.”

“Maybe I dreamed it, but I thought I heard a woman’s voice call out. I don’t recollect anything else.” Wardlaw discovered that by shifting his shoulders a trifle he could get his head at another angle. He saw two serious ruddy faces. “I’m all right—head-achy, but that’ll go away. I’ll be good and stick to the bunk if you’ll tell me what that one thing was.”

“It’ll keep,” repeated the Doctor. “The steward will watch over you until noon, when I’ll come down again. Come along, Captain. What he needs is real sleep.”

Wardlaw sensibly closed his eyes, for the glare hurt. So they had come at him boldly, and something had miraculously intervened? Sensing that there was now no possibility of getting the receipt—for whatever purpose they had in mind—the Japs had attacked him boldly and sinisterly; and but for a miracle John Wardlaw would at this moment be resting in the gray muck of the bay. If he hadn’t been mooning!

He dozed. By and by he heard voices, mere murmurs.

“Anybody there?” he called.

“I, sir,” answered the steward promptly.

"Bolster me up so that I can lie on my side."

"Yes, sir."

"That's better. Whom were you talking to?"

"I was humming a tune, sir," lied the steward.

"Ventriloquist—I see. I'm all right. Never mind trying to clean up."

"Doctor's orders you're not to talk, sir."

"Hang the Doctor's orders! I'm no infant."

Once more Wardlaw dozed, and gradually went down into sound slumber. The consciousness of a pleasant intermittent coolness eventually aroused him. He glanced ceilingward. The glare was gone. From this he gathered that he had slept well into the afternoon. Then he directed his attention to the shadow which rose and fell beside him.

Seated upon a camp-stool was Miss Allison, and in her hand was a palm-leaf. Her eyes were closed, as if a long vigil had wearied her. An almost irresistible desire seized him to reach out, catch the hand and kiss it. Queer, that he should have such a desire! How long had she been here?

Now that he saw the face for the first time in repose, he observed what he thought to be the character which lay behind it. It was more than a beautiful face. Unanimated, all the salient features were open to analysis, and the strength of the ensemble overshadowed the mere beauty. He was no judge of women's faces, but he was eminently a judge of men's; and there were characteristics here

that spoke of masculine attributes. That little break in the nose—the bridge—meant resolution; the sweep of the handsome mouth, firmness; the turn of the jaw, courage. What a woman!

He sighed. Her eyes opened quickly, and the fan dropped.

"Awake? Better?"

"Just now. Do you know that you are very beautiful?"

"Mercy, I thought you were a bashful man!"

"I don't know; I believe I've changed a lot."

"No doubt of it. For weeks you never noticed me."

"But I did!"

"Is there anything you might care to tell me?"

"Nothing."

"The Doctor said I might look in if I didn't start you to talking."

"What the Doctor says doesn't worry me."

She began waving the fan again. Suddenly he reached out and caught her by the forearm. She gasped.

"What's the matter?"—anxiously.

"You surprised me."

"That wasn't a cry of surprise; it was a gasp of pain."

"Nonsense! Would you like some tea?"

"No; I want to talk."

She got up. "That's against orders."

"I want to know what happened last night. Nobody's told me yet."

"To-morrow, when you're out on deck again. Good-by!"

"Just a minute! Please listen!"

She paused.

"Is there any way for me to get an ice-cream soda—chocolate preferred?"

"In this part of the world?"

"Yes. We get queer ideas, sometimes, we chaps who spend half our days in deserts and jungles. O'Holleran—one of my subordinates—is always moaning in his sleep for corned beef and cabbage. And I'm always wanting an ice-cream soda. I don't see anything so funny in that."

For she was laughing. "Some day I may tell you why I laugh. Good-by. I'll have them send you some tea." And she went out.

The door opened a quarter of an hour later, and the steward presented a tray with tea and toast.

"Take it away," ordered Wardlaw grumpily.

"But Miss Allison said you wanted some, sir."

"I did—but I don't."

Except for an occasional spell of light-headedness, Wardlaw was all right the next day. He wore his cap at a truculent angle—thereby keeping the inquisitive at bay and the lump in obscurity. But he kept to his chair most of the day. He was weak. She came and sat down beside him several times, but her visits were not of a sedative quality; she was up and away the moment he began to ask

questions. Once, however, she remained as long as half an hour. This was during Huroki's visit.

The little yellow man expressed lively sympathy. "You have had an accident, they tell me."

"Nothing serious. Some harbor thief got aboard and tried to rob me. But all my valuables are locked up, and my death wouldn't benefit anybody."

Wardlaw smiled affably, and Huroki returned the smile.

"I see," said the latter, shrugging. "You should have gone ashore with the rest of us."

"You don't like him," said Miss Allison when Huroki was gone. "Why do you play bridge with him so much?"

"I like to watch him. The Japs are interesting people."

"You spoke of danger the other night."

"Wasn't guesswork, was it?"

"You were expecting something like this. What have you been doing?"

"Who, I?"

"Yes. Why should the Japanese try to kill you?"

"How do you know it was a Jap?" he countered quickly.

"The Captain's Cingalese servant saw the affair."

"I heard a woman's voice call out. Was it you? Did you come back?"

"Why should I make a confidant of you? You will not make one of me."

"What do you wish to know?" He looked into her eyes with disconcerting frankness.

"You expected to be set upon. Why?"

"Miss Allison, there is a great business project going on—" he began.

Impulsively she put out her hand. "Wait! What prevented you from telling me the other night?"

"The knowledge that I had no right to tell you," he answered simply.

"Then don't tell me."

"You're the oddest woman I ever met."

"Most women are odd. We always want to know."

"You wanted to see if my loyalty was worth anything; is that it? Thanks for catching me up. I'm not so strong as I thought I was."

"The fault is mine. I had no right to press such questions."

He looked at her sharply. He wasn't sure, but there seemed to be an undertone of mockery. "I'll tell you all about it when we get to Hong Kong—that is, if you'll tell me why you laughed when I wanted a soda."

"Agreed. Do you know who Huroki is?"

"A recent graduate from Yale—so he says."

"Well, if I were you, I wouldn't play cards with him so much."

"Do you know what he is?"

"What's your idea?"

"Why, he may be in the Japanese secret service."

"Then it's world politics?"

There was a pause. He was the first to break it.

"Has it ever occurred to you that we white men are mighty unpoetical when we name our women?"

"Name our women?" she repeated vaguely.

"Yes. We call our women *Mary* or *Bess* or *Jane*; and where's the poetry in such names? To the American Indian, the Hindu, the Arab, and the yellow people—a name means something. The Indian calls his daughter Laughing-Waters; the Arab, the Wind-in-the-sky; the Jap, Lotus-Blossom. That's poetry."

"My name is Jean—if that's what you're after."

"That has a pleasant sound. But what does it mean?"

"Me," she said; and they both laughed.

One thing deeply puzzled him. She never spoke of home; never once, no matter how many clumsy traps he laid, did she lift the smallest end of the curtain. He was not ordinarily curious; but his phase held a fascination for him, and he was always maneuvering toward it.

The night they left Singapore he dined again with the Captain; and it was just after he had lighted his cigar that he summoned his courage and asked the sailor point blank what he knew about Miss Allison.

"Ripping young woman!" cried the Captain with honest enthusiasm. "I'm beginning to enjoy my dinners in the salon."

"Has she ever spoken of her family—her people?"

"Not that I recall. She's a mighty jolly

young woman, and a proper one. Are you looking for a past, young man?"

"I feel like a cad!" exclaimed Wardlaw. "But she interests me as no other woman ever did; and I want to know all about her. I don't stammer when I talk to her. I don't bump into things as I used to. I'm not a woman-hater. I've just been plain naturally scared of them."

"A bashful man? And I always thought that one of them had ripped your plates under the boiler-room! So you want to know all about her?" There was a twinkle in the Captain's blue eyes. "That's easily done."

"How?"

"Well, you might marry her."

"Marry her?" gasped Wardlaw.

"Yes. She'll tell you everything—or nothing, which is just as likely."

"Marry her!" This time it was a kind of whisper, an echo of an astounding thought. "By George!" Wardlaw got up and went outside, leaving the Captain squinting at the starry night beyond the slightly swinging door.

The South China Sea has a bag full of tricks. She is a most deceiving lady—beatific calms, typhoons. You may cross her twenty voyages and see nothing more active than a school of porpoise disturb her placid bosom. You may make another twenty and do nothing but dodge or plow through the loosed spirits of ten million whirling dervishes. Green mountains of water, green skies and black horizons, and a booming as muffled bells.

They ran into the outer circle of one of these terrors. All day it blew great guns and little guns. The forward hatch was literally torn away; a boat was stove in, and the rail on the starboard quarter smashed into a junk of twisted piping and splintered teak.

There were few in the dining saloon that night. Miss Allison beckoned to Wardlaw to come over to her table, which he did readily. After dinner she suggested that they go outside.

"Pretty rough weather," he said doubtfully.

"I'm not afraid. I'm a good sailor."

"That isn't it. You might get hurt."

"Come along!"

"All right—to the last ditch."

She put on her heavy deck-coat, tied a veil over her hair, linked her arm in his and led him outside. This camaraderie was to Wardlaw the most delightful experience he had ever known.

The moon was up, but wan. The ship seemed to be plowing through mountains of molten silver and valleys of ink. By pulling themselves along the deck-house rail they succeeded in getting well forward. Suddenly, in a spirit of mischief, she broke away from the rail and tried to stand alone. A dip sent her staggering toward the outer rail. But even as he sprang toward her a rise sent her into his arms.

And—he kissed her!

CHAPTER X

THIS kiss was squarely on the lips—no clumsy cheek caress. The cave-man! But instantly he knew that he hadn't played the cave-man cynically. He had kissed her because he had to. An abominable act! His conscience was already at war with his senses. He had grossly insulted her. He would never forgive himself. He was stunned with the appalling thought that this would mark the end of things.

She was first to recover from the shock. Quietly she put her palms against his chest and pressed him back, for he hadn't thought to let her go! Then she caught at the hand-rail and drew herself around into the lee of the ladies' salon, into which she vanished.

He turned and staggered toward the beacon of light that streamed out of the smoke room door. He curled himself up in a lounge corner and smoked. It hadn't been premeditated; but this lack did not make it a whit less excusable. She would interpret the act logically as his real attitude toward her, the attitude of a cad. Yet he could not ignore the exultation which still tingled his blood.

He had kissed her, with her hair, sweet-smelling blowing into his face, her heart echoing the thunder of his own. No matter

what happened, he would always have this moment.

He raised his head suddenly. A perfume, subtle, elusive: what had it been? Lemon-verbena! That was it. It was her kitbag that had gotten into his cabin by mistake. Lemon-verbena!

But why had he kissed her? What was behind this inexplicable act? He lowered his pipe, his mouth agap. He loved her!

He went outside again. The smoke room had become insupportably stuffy. He wanted the singing wind in his hair; he wanted to watch the mobile hills and valleys, the rocking moon; he wanted to get close to the elemental. He loved her!

All the baffling puzzles solved. Why, he must have fallen in love with her back there that day at the theatre. "Marry," the Captain had said. And so he would—if she would have him—if she could forgive him! "Play the cave-man," the professor had said. Well, he had played it; and if he hadn't played it, he would never have known that he loved her—before it was too late and she had passed over the horizon. So it had come. He, John Wardlaw, old-stick-in-the-mud, had found him a desirable woman.

It was midnight before he turned in; but he couldn't sleep.

Neither could she. She heard his door slam, and she sat up in her bunk and stared in the direction of that sound. Why she suddenly burst into tears and buried her face in the pillow is a mystery not to be solved.

Wardlaw was up early the next morning. This would be their last day together—or the first of many. He was filled with a great courage. He ate his breakfast hurriedly and went on deck in search of her. He found her at the starboard rail, chatting amiably with Huroki; and Wardlaw's fine resolves went by the board. Nevertheless he approached. She had seen him, and if he ran away now, he was lost.

Huroki did not leave. He greeted Wardlaw with a smile that displayed his sound white teeth. He spoke of the storm, recounted a previous experience, regretted that Japan would be cold until May. Perhaps he observed the gloomy abstraction in Wardlaw's eyes.

"Mr. Wardlaw, America is a great country, and you Americans are supremely clever. Perhaps we shall meet again some day. Good morning." And with a choppy little stride, Huroki walked away.

"What did he mean by that?" asked Wardlaw, puzzled.

"We have just discovered that we belong to the Mutual Admiration Society. I have found out from him that he really admires our Yankee ingenuity, and he has learned from me that Americans have a wholesome respect for the Japanese. Good morning!" She opened a hand, and a thousand little pieces of paper fluttered on the wind.

"You are not going?"

"I am simply greeting you. Hadn't the opportunity before."

He mumbled something unintelligible.

"Hong Kong to-morrow," she said, "and winter. I feel a touch of it in the air." She drew her collar closer about her throat.

Wardlaw had expected reproaches. He stared at her dumbly.

"What a wonderful journey it has been!" she exclaimed, turning her eyes away. The utter bewilderment on the man's face! Another man would have instantly recognized her attitude, her willingness to overlook a misstep. Apology was written so plainly in his face that she did not require any verbal expression. "Have you packed?"

"Packed?"

"Yes. I'm going to pack this morning. I hate bundling things into my trunks the last moment. Come and see me at tea-time." She waved her hand airily, and was gone.

Sulkily he went into the ship's library. He tried a dozen novels, and none of them held him after the first page or two. Anyhow, her manner suggested that she was willing to overlook the affront, provided, of course, that he never repeated it or spoke of it.

Later he made two or three desperate sallies, but she had company, more than he had ever seen about her before. He kept his promise to join her at tea. But all the chairs were filled, and he had to stand, first on one leg and then on the other, like a pelican or an adjutant bird. Finally he set his cup on deck, excused himself and marched off in a huff which was visible to everybody.

But he did find her alone after dinner—on

the boat deck, in the same little projection where he had received that crock on the head.

"I don't suppose you'll ever forgive me," he said abruptly, by way of greeting.

"For what?"

He saw the trap; but he stepped boldly into it. "I sha'n't apologize."

"Well?"

"I'm not sorry in the least."

"Why should you be? The wildness of the storm, the singing of the wind, the mountains rising and falling everywhere. Perhaps we were both a little mad. So a kiss, under such circumstances, is harmless."

"No,"—doggedly—"it wasn't harmless. Will you marry me?"

She gave a little gasp. Then she demanded: "Are you offering me marriage because your conscience troubles you?"

"No. Because I love you."

She had nothing to say for a moment. "So you wish to marry me?"

"Yes."

"Knowing nothing about me whatever?"

"I know all I want to know—that you're the only woman I ever wanted."

"Captain Wardlaw, that is finely said. I appreciate the honor you do me."

"Yes—or no?"

"Neither one nor the other. I shall be in Hong Kong for several days. If, when we meet again, you are willing to repeat what you have just told me, I promise you an answer." And with this perplexing statement she turned and walked swiftly away, and was

gone before he realized that she had not given him any address.

The ship dropped anchor in the bay of Hong Kong at dawn; but Wardlaw did not turn out until seven. He had all the time in the world now. He had won out.

As he stepped out of his cabin, he saw the door of hers wide open—and the cabin empty.

"Where is Miss Allison?" he asked of the steward.

"She went ashore about dawn, sir. A private launch came out for her."

This struck Wardlaw as rather odd. "Did she leave any note for me?"

"No, sir—that is, not with me."

Wardlaw proceeded to the upper deck. Gone, and without a word! He became filled with a sense of foreboding. His cogitations were brought to a close by a vigorous thwack on the shoulders. He whirled about.

"O'Holleran!" he cried.

"Red hair and all! Gee, boss, but it's good to see you. Come on! Chedsoye is below in the Company launch. Don't bother about breakfast. We'll have that at the club. All aboard!"

"Where's the old boy?"

"Having his bacon and eggs on the Peak. Hustle!"

"Give me a quarter of an hour."

"But hustle! Where's your stuff?"

Wardlaw gave his brisk lieutenant directions and hurried off to the purser's office. After all, why should he let a woman bother him? He was back in the game again, and

that was all that really mattered. Carrington, Huroki & Company had gone into bankruptcy. Ainslee would probably dance the can-can when he was told what was in the portfolio.

"Well, the voyage is over," Wardlaw said cheerfully to the purser. "I'll take that little portfolio of mine, if you please. The Captain has the receipt in his safe."

"All right, Mr. Wardlaw." The purser stooped before his safe, laid the portfolio on the counter and opened his signature-book.

Wardlaw signed it and opened the portfolio. He drew forth a print and spread it out. Frantically he pulled out another and another. But none of these concerned the Oriental Construction Company. Wardlaw sat down weakly.

"What's the matter, Mr. Wardlaw?" asked the purser anxiously.

"The matter is, I've been robbed in a most singular fashion."

"Robbed?"

"Yes. But don't worry. No fault of yours. These are the things I deposited with you, but they are not what I believed I was depositing."

"I say, Mr. Wardlaw, but I thought it bally odd at the time."

"What was?"—dully.

"Why, Miss Allison deposited a portfolio exactly like yours, and she claimed it a little after five this morning."

CHAPTER XI

WARDLAW was quite calm now, outwardly. He refolded the worthless prints and restored them to the portfolio, so like his own that only the closest scrutiny might note the difference. He could only appreciate the diabolical cleverness of this amazing substitution. The little incidents that led up to the theft would return to him later, in their chronological order. But just now there was only one thought: he had been betrayed by the woman he loved.

"A bad blow, sir?" asked the purser; for Wardlaw's face looked strangely gray and old.

"I'm afraid it is. There's no repairing it."

"Well, I thought I knew something about women!"

"What do you mean by that?"—in a detached kind of way.

"Why, she looked straight. Politics?"

"World-politics."

"Ah, that's different. Very clever women get into that game, and they're not all as black as they're painted."

"No doubt." Lemon-verbena, and the mad wind blowing her hair into his face.

"Anything I can do?"

"Nothing. By the way, has that Jap Hur-oki left the ship?"

"He went ashore with Miss Allison."

"Thanks!" Nerves began to awake, now here, now there. Muscular knots formed at the base of Wardlaw's jaw, and his eyes became as hard as Arctic ice. "You will say nothing of this."

"Trust me, Mr. Wardlaw."

"Good morning."

The first clear idea was to seek the Captain. The old sailor might be able to offer some side-lights. But the Captain was nonplussed at the news.

"You can't be talking of our Miss Allison?"

"No one else."

"There's a mistake somewhere."

"It was on my part," replied Wardlaw grimly.

"Then why did she save your life?"

"Save my life?"

"That she did! If she hadn't called out, interposed her arm, we'd have had to ship you home from Colombo. My Cingalese servant saw the whole affair, for I set him guard over you. The wonder is that her arm wasn't broken."

"Her arm?" Wardlaw now recalled her gasp of pain when he caught her by the arm that morning after the assault. "I don't know what to think or what to do," he said despairingly. "The purser declares on his oath she deposited a portfolio like mine: and it was mine. She might be a tender nurse and a thief at the same time. Not an ordinary thief, Captain. A big international business intrigue, and I've proved that I'm the most worth-

less pawn on the board. It's hard. I've worked so faithfully and loyally over the deal. I did everything I possibly could, but they were too clever. Captain, I'm done for, broken for good. The biggest thing in my career gone to pot. The finest old man in the world depending upon me and I've failed him. I took every precaution a human being could. But they beat me."

"But Miss Allison! What are you going to do?"

"Walk into my office and hand in my resignation. Oh, I'll always find work; but I'll never again be trusted with big things. I'm done for. It isn't the money. I've plenty. But the biggest thing in the world has slipped through my fingers—the two biggest things," he added in afterthought. "Good-by, Captain."

They shook hands; the sailor's gaze followed Wardlaw until the latter's head disappeared below the deck. Intermittently, for some time after, the Captain wagged his head.

"Look alive, boss," called O'Holleran from the launch. "We've got your duds. No trunks?"

"Nothing but the kitbags." Wardlaw went down the ladder and took his seat in the launch. "How's the old boy?"

"Chipper. He won't be able to see you until to-night. He left word for you to go up the Peak and dine with him."

"Did the bankers arrive?"

"Three hundred million dollars' of 'em!

Open her up, boy!" O'Holleran called to the Chinese mechanic.

"Hello, Ched! Got rid of that ague, I see."

"Well, I don't shake as much as I did. Have a pleasant trip, boss?"

"Fine!"

There was no use dragging these fine fellows in; he alone was culpable; so he decided to say nothing to them. Idly he watched the flag maneuvers of the gray battleships over Kowloon way. Everything was ready, and the secret in the hands of the Japanese Government! The confidence he had had in the mere sight of that portfolio! Poor fool, why hadn't he opened it then, while the odd substitution of the kitbags was still fresh in his mind?

He reached into his vest pocket for a match. With the match he fetched two bits of paper. "*Car—China.*" Carrington! Not being sure of the Japs, he had sent along the woman. How easy it was to translate the meaning of her friendliness!

Still, why should he blame her? If she had betrayed him, it was during an hour when they were totally unknown to each other, except by sight. The galling idea was that perhaps she had been smiling in her sleeve all the while. The woman he loved, and would go on loving until the end of his days.

In the pay of Carrington—that is to say, a secret agent for the General Construction Company. He had read of beautiful women doing this sort of work, but he had always at-

tributed it to the imaginative flights of novelists. No doubt she had turned over the prints and estimates to Huroki—for a fat price. Anyhow, they had left the ship together. Never again would he scent the perfume of lemon-verbena without distaste.

A woman-hater! It now appeared on the face of the waters that he was due to become one in all earnest.

"What's the matter, boss?" asked O'Holieran.

"Why?"

"You look a bit peaked."

"Breakfast will jack me up."

"How'd you leave that little ol' New York?"

"Too suddenly to please me. But how's the old boy's health?"

"You can never tell by his looks. But I guess the trip did him a lot of good. Never saw such a busy rooster. He's been up to Peking and back four times. And I'll wager there isn't a doorknob in the palace he hasn't rattled. All ready for you, boss."

All ready for him! Wardlaw swallowed with difficulty and stared at the hotel on the Peak. In a few hours he would be up there, telling of his supreme failure. He mapped out exactly what he should do: a frank confession that the little yellow men had beaten him. On no account would he mention the woman.

He struck that day from his calendar. He never could recollect what he did from the hour of landing until seven o'clock that night,

when he entered the lobby of the hotel where Ainslee put up whenever he was in Hong Kong. The Chinese servant who led Wardlaw up to Ainslee's suite remarked that Mr. Ainslee was sending off some cables and would be with him presently.

In the centre of the living room was a table set with shining silver and spotless linen. The fatted calf for the prodigal. Wardlaw shrugged and walked at once to one of the windows and stood there staring down at the sparkling harbor.

Where was she? Of what was she thinking at this moment? Would he ever see her again? A kiss and a whiff of lemon-verbena! How well he knew John Wardlaw! Had she appeared before him at this moment, he would have fallen at her feet, forgiven her everything, followed her, married her.

He heard the door open and close, and he turned. His heart did not seem to have as much room as usual.

"Hello, son!" hailed Henry Ainslee, coming forward with outstretched hands, his tanned and ruddy face expanded in the friendliest smile imaginable.

Wardlaw pressed the hands powerfully, stirred as he was by the thought of all this man had done for him.

"Mr. Ainslee, perhaps I've no right to shake your hands. I've failed."

"Failed? Here, sit down on the lounge. Have a cigar? No? What do you mean by failed?"

"Your warning, which I received in Cairo,

was obeyed. I took every precaution. But I'm only a civil engineer; I'm not clever enough for this sort of game. The little yellow men got the best of me. By this time the Japanese Government knows everything."

"Tell me exactly what happened. I put the game in your hands, son. Give me all the facts."

Briefly Wardlaw recounted his adventure—with one exception.

"Lord, Lord! Why didn't you let me know what you had done? Why didn't you cable me that you had drawn up rough estimates and specifications? What a mistake! Why didn't O'Holleran tip me?"

"I had made him promise; I had made them all promise. I was so afraid that something would get out."

"But to me!"

"I wanted to surprise you."

"I guess you've done it."

"I had no inkling of what was going on in New York. Perhaps you should have been a little more explicit. But you were ill, they said, and I made allowances. And yet ordinarily I should have pulled through all right. I was betrayed in a most remarkable manner."

"Betrayed?" Ainslee twisted his unlighted cigar from one corner of his mouth to the other.

"Some one beside yourself knew about that portfolio. Even had one of my kitbags imitated so cleverly that it completely fooled me. The substitution was made before we left

Port Saïd; and from there to Hong Kong I lived in blissful ignorance. I made so many mistakes! Could they have approached your private secretary?"

"As easily as they could O'Holleran or yourself. No; the leak couldn't have been there. Too bad, too bad! Well, we'll take our medicine. You're the best boy I've ever known. Nobody's infallible."

"Carrington was back of it. Not having a true angle of the game that was being played in New York, he laid a trap for me and I walked straight into it. He asked me how long it would take to build the road, and like a fool I said five years. Carrington's an engineer, and a good one. He knew what that meant, and laid his mines accordingly. Five years! I might just as well have told him that we had drawn up specifications and estimates as we went along. And I gave it away."

"So I was informed."

"I'll resign."

"Better hang on a little while longer." Ainslee's chin sank into his collar. "The old plate! Well, it's all in the game. Your loyalty, son, is worth something to me personally. I acquit you of any blame. It's the way the cards fell. You happen to be an honest man, and when you fight a crook, you have to use crooked methods."

"Mr. Ainslee, I admire you more than any man I know. I am grateful for all you have done for me; but I rather believe that this is the end of my usefulness."

"Anything else to confess?"

"Nothing."

Ainslee took from his pocket a folded slip of paper. He carefully spread it out on a knee.

"*How old was Cupid?* How did that strike you, son?"

"Until I looked into the code addendum, I thought it was some joke."

"Clarke thought it was a joke when I asked him." Ainslee chuckled. "Didn't he tell you I was showing signs of senile decay? Son, instinctively I knew that the moment I left New York, they'd let out something to the Japs. A mere hint would be sufficient; for the Japanese Government isn't in love with Captain John Wardlaw, late of the Engineers."

Ainslee got up and began to walk about, waving the paper to emphasize his remarks. He was a big man, robust and a trifle florid. He looked healthy, but his heart was in sore straits. Each time he took a sharp breath came a blinding stab; and sooner or later, that stab would go a little too deep, and then—good-by! So he put his house in order, as you will see.

Occasionally he sent an oblique glance at the depressed countenance of his trusted lieutenant. A three-cornered fight, with one foot ostensibly in the grave! The plate, this boy here and—he stopped before Wardlaw and smiled down at him.

"Son, I was ill; but just now I feel I'm going to get well. Doubtless you believe I ought to have been more explicit in my first

cable to you. I knew exactly what I was doing. They haven't dubbed me Old Details for nothing. I was in pretty bad shape when I left New York, but not so bad that I couldn't outthink and outwit a precious pair like Clarke and Carrington. I let them believe I had both feet in the grave. That was my trap. They did not fall into it; they jumped in. For weeks I've had a private detective trailing that pair. Here, read this cable which I just sent Clarke."

The change of tone was enough to send Wardlaw's thoughts whirling. Since dawn he had been knocked about, mentally. What kind of a blow was coming now? Ainslee's tone was ironical, but it was buoyant. Wardlaw read: "*Never kick a dog because he looks dead; he may be only sleeping.*" He turned a bewildered countenance upon his benefactor. "Is that in the code?"

"Son, it's the purest and simplest English I could think of."

Suddenly Ainslee seized his lieutenant by the shoulders and shook him boisterously.

"How old was Cupid? He was any old age—mine, if you like. Come, wake up; no need to look at me like that. Never was sounder in the head than at this moment."

"But——"

"But me no buts! You were never going to peep, were you? You were going to turn that page down like a sportsman and say nothing to anyone. Big enough to take your medicine without blinking!

"I am getting along; my day is over. When

this road is finished, you'll come to New York and wobble around in my official shoes. This is my last fight. From now on I'm going to play. I've made you my heir, to carry the plate on. And you'll carry it. You've been the victim of circumstances—circumstances more or less cooked up. Clarke and Carrington will jump to the General Construction after next election. You'll make a good ambassador—with a good coach at your elbow."

Clarke was right: the old boy was as mad as a hatter. Heir? When the road was finished? Ambassador? What a pity, what a pity! And O'Holleran had said never a word.

"All right, Mr. Ainslee; anything you say," he said in a mildly conciliatory tone.

Ainslee exploded. "By the Lord Harry, the boy really believes I'm daffy! Listen to Old Details, son. You've worked under my banner for fifteen solid years. I look upon you with the same faith I look upon my watch, which is a good one. If you said a deal could be done in such and such a time, you were always correct. You said it would take a year to go from the Tsaidam Swamps to Shanghai. You always made allowances for obstacles in your computations. You were gone on this trip fourteen months. Knowing you, these two extra months set me thinking. You were always doing the unexpected. So when you started for New York, I wired O'Holleran for facts. I gave him my reasons for wanting them, and he let your cat out of the bag. Perhaps I didn't crowd

on steam after that glorious news! I kept the wireless going until the batteries gave out. But I had a great idea in regard to you, son; so I couldn't take you into my confidence. I had to warn you, but I could do no more than that. *How old was Cupid?* I had to leave you to your own devices. Well, between Port Saïd and Colombo I received a wireless giving me that estimate of yours."

"What?" Wardlaw's gloomy eyes became filled with fire.

"Yes, sir. A week ago Norton and his banker friends put their lordly fists under mine, and three days ago the Chinese Government——"

"You've pulled it through?" Wardlaw began to feel a bit light-headed.

"On your rough estimate and the word of Henry Ainslee."

"But how did you get that estimate?" demanded Wardlaw, thrilling.

"By wireless."

"No, no! Who sent it?"

"I'll spin a yarn."

"I don't want to hear any yarn. I want to know who sent that estimate."

"I'm going to tell this yarn; and if you interrupt me, I'll fire you!"

"Very well," agreed Wardlaw. He was half convinced that he was in the middle of some fantastic dream. Ainslee's heir? The deal gone through? Carrington beaten? He clasped his hands and bore down until the knuckles cracked. He wanted to feel a hurt to assure himself that he was really awake.

Ainslee cleared his voice. "I'm a lonely old codger. Wife and boy died thirty years ago. I'm as lonely in my way as you are in yours, Jack."

Jack! How good that sounded, coming from the lips of the old boy.

"I've had my eye on you for years. Maybe you weren't aware of it, but I've been keeping the closest kind of tabs on you. If I had a son, I'd want him built like you, mentally and physically. You used to puzzle me. You were such a shy, incurious duffer. Never bothered about New York; never fished for information; took care of your end and let it go at that. So finally I came to the conclusion that it was your work. You loved the job as another man might have loved a woman. You always picked out something nobody thought could be done—and you got away with it. I used to laugh. If a woman turned the corner, you ran like a white-head; if it was a tiger, Lordy, what a scrap!

"On the other hand, I began to grow afraid that the wrong woman might land you in the end. To paraphrase an old saying of my friend Fitzsimmons, the bashfuller they are, the harder they fall. More of that later. You had the supreme faculty of making your subordinates love you. You can get more through a man's heart than through his brain. You think I won this fight. No. You won it because you had an idea. I only made use of it." Ainslee's hands went down and closed over Wardlaw's smarting fingers. He raised the young man to his feet. "Son you thought

this was a business stunt. On the contrary, it was, if you dig down deep enough, only an old man in search of a son. Will you be mine?"

"Why, God bless you, Mr. Ainslee, for that!" Wardlaw choked. "I don't want to be your heir; but if you'll put your hand on my shoulder once in a while and call me Jack, I'll be satisfied."

"The whole shooting-match goes along with me. I'm a romantic old coot, if you want to know. The drawer under my bunk on the yacht is filled with soft-soapy yarns; but I like 'em. One day I wrote a story in my head. It appealed to me so strongly that I had to dramatize it. *How old was Cupid?* Don't interrupt me. I had an idea in regard to you. I had another in regard to someone else. And neither of you realized that I was dramatizing you. I tested you in every possible way, and always you emerged—clean. Well, things turned out as I planned. You were betrayed, but you were going down into oblivion without a whimper. I like that. Son, I betrayed you. Scarcely a day went by that I did not get a wireless."

"Will you tell me who sent you that estimate?"

"A woman. And there she is now!"

There came a metallic rattle of curtain rings, and Wardlaw's glance shot in the direction of the sound. In the doorway, between the portières which led to the adjoining room, stood a woman in black, her face and arms and shoulders as luminously pale as moonshine.

CHAPTER XII

THERE are moments—flashes of happiness—which we always cherish, even to the smallest details. We store them away in the back of our heads, and only half-lights and singleness bring them forth again. Such a moment was this tableau to Wardlaw. So long as he lived he would see her there, framed in the portières, the incline of her body like that of the winged victory in the Louvre.

“Hello, Junior!” cried Ainslee.

“Hello, Uncle Henry!”

She let the portières fall behind her and came toward the two men without embarrassment.

“Jack, this is Cameron Junior, my ward,” said Ainslee, “daughter of my old partner, Dick Cameron.”

Typhoons and kitbags and lemon-verbena! Wardlaw was incapable of stirring so much as a finger. Perhaps she misinterpreted his attitude, for the smile faded, and another woman would have noted anxiety in her eyes.

“I am pleased to meet Captain Wardlaw—again,” she said, slowly extending her hand. “Uncle, I believe he doesn’t intend to shake hands with me! Isn’t he going to forgive me?”

“I’ll leave that for you two to find out,”

said Ainslee. "I'll be back in twenty minutes—and Samson pulled down the Temple in two."

Ainslee went out and closed the door behind him. He did not stop, but continued on down to the main dining room. He was hungry. Having an anticipatory mind, he knew that he must eat his dinner now or never.

The first movement Wardlaw made, after the door closed, was to draw his hands across his bewildered eyes.

"I'm really and truly," she said with a provocative smile. But she did not renew the offer of her hand—an ominous sign, had he but known.

"Cameron. I never knew he had a daughter." Instantly he knew that he had said something of incomparable brilliancy, something to be placed in the category of Balaam's historical address.

"No doubt. I've been Uncle Henry's ward since I was fifteen—nine years, in fact."

"You don't need a guardian."

"Ah, that's better. We'll manage this interview after all. Sorry you won't shake hands." She floated past him to the window. "China—and over there, the road!"

The road! That stirred Wardlaw's mental machinery, even if ponderously. The road! It meant something to her also. The sweep of her glorious shoulders and the poise of her magnificent head! The road! It was like a bell to a sleeper: Wardlaw was beginning to wake up.

"My mother's name was Allison. I took

that. All my life I wanted to get into the game—feel the stir of big adventure where men risk their lives for an idea. It was in my blood. But I was a woman. My heart was big enough, but my petticoats were in the way. I've been after Uncle Henry for years, but he has always put me off with excuses. I wanted to be of some use in the world; I wanted to do things. I was like a feather in the wind; I drifted or flew, but never with any objective. Think of his having time to dramatize us, and still achieve a great end! Think of the heart of a man who, desperately pressed in a stupendous business intrigue, could find the time to try to make two people happy! We started out bravely, you and I, upon a great adventure—in the end to learn that we were puppets on a wire. Think of his finding time to dramatize us! How well he knew us both! We thought it was really and truly, anyhow. A souvenir for my old age. You amused me. You were as shy as a trout I once knew. If I hadn't been accidentally locked in your cabin that day, I doubt we'd ever become acquainted."

To Wardlaw the room seemed to have grown unaccountably chill.

"My mother died shortly after my birth. This, along with the fact that I was a girl, nearly broke my father's heart. He had so wanted a boy! When I was five he began to make a boy of me. He took me along with him into the wildernesses. I lived in tents and shacks. I grew up hard and sound and a little wild. But he did not neglect my edu-

cation. He was not only a great engineer; he was also a brilliant scholar. He was so vital physically that the world never considered him anything but a human dynamo. When he died, I knew a great deal about nature and some facts about men.

"I was fifteen then. Naturally I fell under Uncle Henry's care. He saw to it that I should receive the advantages due to my sex. But the spirit of adventure was so strong in me that education and city life never succeeded in repressing it. After I was eighteen I began to travel. I went everywhere, out of the beaten tracks. I rode, hunted, swam, climbed; I made a pilgrimage to all the great engineering feats of the O. C. C. And I heard of you."

It was the way she said that that made the room a little warmer.

"I heard of you; but somehow I was never able to catch up with you. Your exploits fascinated me, and I made a hero out of you, as young girls will sometimes. How I longed to get into the game—something big, vital, exciting! I hate scissors, needles, spools. But I can cook. I had to. Out in the open I had to cook for Father—dear old Daddy! Uncle Henry found me a fine little rebel. But he had been dealing all his life with rebels. He has made a fine art of persuasion. I soon discovered that I liked being tamed—by a proper man. But for a long time I was hobbledehoy.

"Imagine my joy when Uncle Henry called me up one night and told me what he wanted

me to do! I felt like a crusader before the walls of Jerusalem. I was going to add my mite to the splendid monument my father had left behind. I now realize why Uncle Henry is a tower in the business world. He anticipates everything, leaves nothing to chance. He did not know that you had drawn up specifications and estimates; he only prepared against that possibility. He did not know that Carrington would betray us to the Japanese; he only armed himself against the possibility. You had given him duplicate keys to your kitbags; his portfolio and yours were exactly alike; he even got me the label I put on your kitbags.

"All this a month before you came to New York. But you—and O'Holleran and Chedsoye and Jones! It was magnificent. Just you four, to accomplish what you did! Imagine the fervor, the zeal, with which I entered the game—to learn this afternoon that I was acting in a play especially written for me! And all the time I believed that the future of O. C. C. depended solely upon my woman's cleverness. While his idea was merely to throw us together, in stress and danger. There was danger, real danger; and for that part I thank him."

Her voice was like a harp, lightly touched; but there was an undertone which filled him with vague prescience that the future wasn't so clear as might be. He determined not to speak until she was done. Puppets!

"He was always worrying over me, like a hen over a duckling. The streak of wildness

and impulsiveness is still strong in me; and he knows it. He was always in fear that I might marry the wrong man. But of that, more anon. He told me about the secret bottoms in your kitbags. My part was to get your portfolio—before the Japs. All the way across the Atlantic, from Naples to Brindisi, from Constantinople to Alexandria, I studied your kitbags—the one you always carried. I was reasonably assured that if you had any valuables, they would be in that kitbag. Label by label I imitated it. It was extremely difficult, but it was also exciting. Oh, I was clever enough. Even if I was only acting a part, I had to interpolate lines, as they say. And I never enjoyed anything half so much. When the steward set down your kitbags before your cabin door, I personally made the substitution. It took but a minute to change the portfolios. And then I waited—in terror. Supposing you looked into the portfolio, which nine men out of ten would have done? Supposing you discovered the trick at once?"

"I was thinking of you," he said quietly. "That's the reason."

A pause. What was she looking at—the harbor lights? As a matter of fact, she was closely watching his slightest move—his reflection in the window-glass.

"Yesterday morning when you came upon Huroki and me, I had just finished telling him that the Chinese Government had signed the concession. The first night I saw you playing bridge with him, I wired Uncle

Henry his description; and your friend O'Holleran supplied the information that he was a secret agent. He thought you knew, and that we were in secret partnership. I offered him transportation ashore this morning, just to confuse you. Well, I played a part in a man's game, even if Uncle Henry wrote the part for me out of the kindness of his heart. The O. C. C. will go on, and my father's name will go on with it. So many times I wanted to tell you everything—after I had sent the estimates. But the desire in me was strong to see how you would act in the end—when you learned that I had betrayed you. You never told him. That pleased me quite as much as it pleased him. He was always talking about you, always praising you. And now—we must spoil his dream!"

The final phrase went by; he missed its import. He was thinking that here was Scheherazade in the flesh. He saw her nestled among her blue Cashmir pillows. The veil fluttered slightly as she talked. Through the marble lattice, so tenderly and beautifully carved, he could in fancy see the dazzling dusty landscape of India. Just beyond the lattice, on the broad ledge, gay green little parrakeets quarreled and made love, and where the minaret cast its shadow over the black and white marble squares of the court below, slate-colored doves with coral feet waltzed and cooed. Scheherazade!

"What a curious old world it is!" she went on. "How bravely we go forth with what we think to be our own idea, when it is something

long ago mapped out for us! I wonder if you will recall it—a noisy crowd of students on Broadway at night, subdued in a singular fashion? From an imaginative character, you became substance that night, Captain Wardlaw. The man I was with held me back at the edge of things. I liked that man. I was only eighteen. He was handsome, brave, resourceful. I even thought I loved him. But when he refused to go to the aid of my coachman—not from cowardice but from selfishness—the dream dissolved. We saw a man force his way to the curb. We heard him speak quietly and sensibly. His absolute ease and common-sense averted a serious riot.

“My escort uttered a name. It was yours. I broke away and ran after you. It seemed to me as if all New York was on Broadway that night, without objective. I could not reach you in time to thank you. You suddenly dropped out of the crowd and entered a candy-shop. I watched you for a moment. You sat down before the soda-water counter and ordered a chocolate soda. That is why I laughed the other morning. A few minutes later I told my escort I would not marry him. Thanks, Captain! But for you I probably would have been Craig Carrington’s wife this day—a very unhappy woman. No doubt you have often, in a puzzled way, felt the weight of his enmity; for I am sure he always blamed you for my decision. You had played the man where he might have played it. Poor Uncle Henry! His play isn’t going to end the way he wrote it. I am still a rebel. I

would not marry you, Captain Wardlaw, if you were the last man in the world!" She turned and faced him.

"Where are your wraps?" he demanded.

"My wraps?"—thunderstruck.

"Where are they?"

"In the other room. What has happened?"

Wardlaw dashed into the adjoining room and returned with the same furious haste.

"Here!" He held up the cloak.

She slipped her arms into the sleeves, hypnotized by the suddenness of his words and actions.

"Put your hat on! Hurry! We haven't a moment!"

She obeyed mechanically, star-eyed. He put on his own hat and coat. He caught her rather roughly by the arm and drew her to a window.

"See that battleship's searchlight?"

"Yes!"

"Kowloon. We'll take a sampan."

"A sampan?"

"And no time to lose, either! Ah Fee is near the Hong Kong Hotel. That won't take a minute. On the way to the Praya. Come!"

He drew her to the door and out into the hall. She was so bewildered and mystified that she offered no resistance, verbal or physical. They reached the cable-house shortly, and Wardlaw summoned the man in charge.

"Town. A sovereign when you get to the lower end. Stop for nobody. Get in, Miss Cameron."

"Captain Wardlaw!"

"It's life and death, Scheherazade!" Wardlaw literally propelled her into the car, keeping hold of her arm when he sat down beside her. "Start her, man, start her!"

The car gave a little jerk and began to glide down toward the many flickering lights of Hong Kong. Still with her arm imprisoned, Wardlaw helped her to alight from the car at the lower station. Then he raced down the street with her, hailing the first empty carriage.

"Ah Fee's, near the Hong Kong Hotel. Fast!"

The Manchurian pony scuttled away for dear life.

"I shall be here but a moment," said Wardlaw, as the carriage, with a lurch and a screech, drew up before the goldsmith's shop. He dashed into the shop at top speed; two minutes later he dashed out and jumped into the carriage. "Praya—sampan!"

Away they went. When they reached the water-front, Wardlaw dismissed the carriage, grasped the dazed young woman by the arm again and bored her through the moving streams of sailormen and Chinese. Presently she heard strange sounds, a bubbling and a gurgling. It was Wardlaw and the sampanman arguing in Chinese.

"All aboard!" cried Wardlaw. He led the girl to the middle seat, and they sat down. The Chinaman bore down upon the sweep.

"Captain Wardlaw, will you be so kind as to tell me what all this is about?" There was

a space—a breathing space—between each word, for she was all but breathless.

He knew that in his next move he would risk everything; but he did not hesitate. He put his arm around her and kissed her, kissed her eyes, her lips, her hair. What did he care for the Chinaman at the sweep? He released her.

"We are going to Kowloon. There lives a friend of mine. Back home we'd call him a sky-pilot. Around here they call him a splicer. I have four rings in my pocket. One of them is bound to fit. We are going to be married, Scheherazade. We are not going to break Uncle Henry's heart, but we're going to let him eat his bally dinner alone!"

After that, silence, except for the seethe of the water over the sweep and the lap-lap against the sides of the sampan.

Romance! She had resented the cut-and-dried affair so cleverly conceived by Ainslee. She wanted her own love-story; she refused one ready-made. When she told him she would not marry him, the revelation came in a flash that if he left her then, it would be forever. And upon the heels of this revelation came the idea. The cave-man! It had the same ironical effect on his mind as a dash of cold water in the face of a man in a blistering desert. In that moment he understood; it was as if some rare occultism had given him the ability to see into her soul.

Silence! It grew oppressive. Had he won her or lost her? As the lights of the Praya receded, his heart began to drop. Then,

when he had about given up hope, something touched his sleeve, hesitantly. This something moved downward slowly, and presently it became a hand, warm and firm, and touching his, rested there. And then, a ripple of happy laughter!

"Heavens, I thought something dreadful had happened to Uncle Henry or that O. C. C.! Oh, man, what made you think of it? For if you hadn't, I'd never have forgiven you. I'd have married you in the end, for I've loved you I don't know how long. But always this would have been lacking. Let me have the rings."

The rings were all a little too large, but that did not matter.

